

**Volume 16—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 12**  
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**HONOURING THE SPIRIT.**

This subject is (alas) new to many. Not a few seem to have been misled through a wrong understanding of that word concerning the Spirit in John 16:13, as though “He shall not speak of Himself” signified He shall never occupy the saints with His own Person and work, but always direct them to Christ. It is true that the Spirit is here to glorify Christ, yet *that* by no means exhausts His mission. His first work is to direct the attention of sinners to God *as God*, convicting them of rebellion against their Creator, Ruler, and Judge. Then, too, He occupies the saints with the Father: His love, grace, and providential care. But John 16:13 no more means that the Spirit does not magnify Himself than Christ’s “I have not spoken for Myself” (John 12:49) meant that He never occupied people with His own Person—His “come unto *Me*” (Matt. 11:28, John 7:37) proves otherwise.

Others create difficulty out of the fact that, in the economy of redemption, the Spirit now occupies the place of *Servant* of the Godhead, and as such it is incongruous to *worship* Him. Such a cavil hardly deserves reply. But lest some of our readers have been misled by this sophistry, let it be pointed out that during the days of His flesh, Christ occupied the place of “Servant,” the One who came here not to be ministered unto, but to minister; nevertheless, even during that season of His humiliation we are told “Behold there came a leper and *worshipped* Him” (Matt. 8:2). And have we not read that when the wise men from the east entered the house where He was, they “fell down and *worshipped* Him” (Matt. 2:11)? Thus, the fact that the Holy Spirit is the Executive of the Godhead by no means debars Him of His title to our love and homage. Some say that because the Spirit is *in* us, He is not a suitable Object of worship, as the Father and Son without us. But is the Spirit within the *only* relation He sustains to us? Is He not omnipresent, infinitely above us, and as such an appropriate Object of worship!?

That the Holy Spirit *is to be* publicly owned and equally honoured with the Father and the Son is very evident from the terms of the great commission, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, *and of the Holy Spirit*” (Matt. 28:19). Now to be baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit is either a real act of *worship*, or otherwise it would be a mere formality—which of the two is not difficult to determine. In view of this verse, no one need have the slightest hesitation in rendering homage to the Spirit as he does to the Father and the Son. This is not a case of reasoning on our parts nor of drawing an inference, but is a part of Divinely-revealed truth. If we praise and revere the Son for what He has done *for* us, shall not the Spirit be adored for what He has wrought *in* us!? The Spirit Himself loves us (Rom. 15:30), by whose authority, then, are we to stifle our love for Him!?

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. *Amen*” (2 Cor. 13:14). Here again the Holy Spirit is honoured equally with the Father and the Son—the Apostles certainly did not slight Him as do some of our moderns. Let it be duly weighed that “communion” is a *mutual* thing, a giving and receiving. In our communion with the Father we receive from Him, and then return to Him love and obedience. From the Son we receive life, and acknowledge it in our praises. From the Spirit we receive regeneration and sanctification, shall we render Him nothing in return? We understand this verse to signify, “O Lord Jesus Christ, let Thy

*grace* be with us; O God the Father, let thy *love* be manifested unto us; O Holy Spirit, let Thy saints enjoy much of thy *communion*.” This invocatory benediction revealed the longings of Paul’s heart unto the Corinthian saints, and those longings prompted his petition on their behalf.

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5). What could be plainer? Here each of the three Divine Persons is distinguished, and the Apostle prays directly *to the Lord the Spirit*—obviously “the Lord” here cannot refer to the Son, for in such case it would signify “The Lord (Jesus) direct your hearts into . . . the patient waiting for Christ.” As it is the Spirit’s office to “*guide* us into all truth” (John 16:13), to “*lead* us into the paths of righteousness” (Psa. 23:3), so to “direct” our hearts into the love of God and longings after Christ. He it is who communicates God’s love to us (Rom. 5:50), and He it is who stirs us up to the performance of duty by inflaming our hearts with apprehensions of God’s tenderness toward us; and for this we are to pray to Him! It is just as though the Apostle said, “O thou Lord the Spirit, warm our cold hearts, with a renewed sense of God’s tender regard for us, stabilize our fretful souls into a patient waiting for Christ.”

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness” (Rev. 1:4, 5). This is as much a prayer—an invocation of blessing—as that recorded in Numbers 6:24-26. The Apostle John desired and supplicated God the Father (“Him who is,” etc.), God the Holy Spirit in the plenitude of His power (“the seven Spirits”), and God the Son, that the seven churches in Asia might enjoy *Their* grace and peace. When I say “The Lord *bless* you, dear brother,” I should utter empty words unless I also *pray* the Lord *to* bless you. This “grace and peace be unto you,” then, was far more than a pleasantry or courtesy: John was making known to the saints his deep *longings* for them, which found expression in ardent supplication for these very blessings to be conferred upon them. In conclusion let us say that every verse of the Bible which bids us “Praise the Lord” or “worship God” has reference to *each* of the Eternal Three.

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:38). Here is something very plain and expressive, the only point needing to be determined is, *Who is* “The Lord of the harvest”? During the days of His earthly ministry, Christ Himself sustained that office, as is clear from His calling and sending forth of the Twelve; but after His ascension, *the Holy Spirit* became such. As proof thereof, we refer to “The Holy Spirit said, Separate *Me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them . . . so they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed” (Acts 13:2, 4)! So again we read, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which *the Holy Spirit* hath made you overseers” (Acts 20:28). It is the Holy Spirit who now appoints the labourers, equips them, assigns their work, and blesses their efforts. In 1 Corinthians 12:5 and 2 Corinthians 3:17 the Holy Spirit is expressly designated “Lord.”—A.W.P.

### The Epistle to the Hebrews.

#### 120. *Christian Rulers*: 13:17.

In last month's article we deviated from our usual custom in this series of giving a word by word exposition of the verse before us, deeming it well to first give it a topical treatment. This magazine, small as is its circulation, goes to hundreds of the Lord's people who are found in many different branches of Christendom. Some of them are sorely perplexed by the babble of tongues which now obtains in the religious realm. The high claims so dogmatically put forth by various sects and systems, assemblies and circles of fellowship, bewilder not a few honest souls, who are desirous of doing that which is most pleasing to the Lord. It was with a desire to afford them some help on what is admittedly a most difficult and complicated subject, that according to the light which God has granted (or withheld from us), we sought to point out some of the fallacies pertaining to the leading positions taken by ecclesiastical writers.

To say that the diverse denominations, even the evangelically orthodox, cannot all be right, and therefore that among them there must be one much more closely in accord with the Scriptures than the others, sounds very feasible; nevertheless, the writer is satisfied that, generally speaking, it has more of error than of truth in it. Comparisons are proverbially odious. As no one believer has all the graces of the Spirit equally developed in him, so no one church or denomination has all the Truth. Think of attempting to draw invidious contrasts between Andrew and Peter, Paul and John, as to which was the more like Christ! As well might one set the rose over against the lily of the valley, or wheat against oats. As 1 Corinthians 14:10 tells us, "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and *none* of them is without signification." So in the Providence of God each particular denomination has filled a place and served a purpose in His plan concerning His cause upon earth.

Nothing is more offensive to God than creature *pride* (Prov. 6:16, 17), and nothing is more to be deplored among those who bear the name of Christ than that a company of them (be it large or small) shall claim "*we are the people*"—the people who meet on the most Scriptural ground, the people who adhere closest to the Word. A spirit of bigotry ill-becomes sinners saved by grace, while jealousies and contentions, enmity, and reviling, among members of the same Family are most reprehensible: "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). Differences of opinion are inevitable while we are in the flesh—permitted by God that we should have occasion to be "*forbearing one another in love*" (Eph. 4:2). That form of church government which accords most closely to the New Testament, and where every detail is scrupulously correct, would be valueless in the sight of God unless it were conducted in love and its worship were "in spirit and in truth."

Let it be attentively considered that at the dawn of Christianity the first officers of the church were immediately called by Christ (Gal. 1:12), which none now are, nor have any since the decease of those who were so called at the first. *They* were endowed with extraordinary gifts and powers—but Christ has not continued to communicate such to His servants. Those original officers were blest with Divine inspiration and infallible guidance, both in preaching the Gospel and appointing things necessary for the churches—which *none* can rightly pretend unto today. Those first officers had a commission giving them authority towards all the world for evangelization and over all churches for their edification—which no servant of Christ can claim today. How utterly vain, then, is the

claim, either unto a “succession” of those officers, or to a perfect emulation of their order of things. Nevertheless, church rulers—bishops and deacons—were to continue, as is clear from 1 Timothy 3, etc.

Now in every orderly society there must be *rulers*, and in all ages and dispensations the same have been mercifully appointed by God: Moses, Joshua, the judges and kings over Israel, are so many illustrations of this principle. It is the same in this era, nor does the presence of the Holy Spirit render unnecessary rulers in the churches. Christ is not the Author of confusion: but endless confusion and turmoil is inevitable where there are no accredited and acknowledged leaders. True, the rulers Christ has instituted for His churches possess no arbitrary power for they are themselves subordinate to Him. Their office is that of a *steward* (Titus 1:7), who is neither to lord it over the household nor to be entirely under subjection to it, but to superintend and provide for the family.

Take the chief steward or “local chamberlain,” of his majesty King George, and while it may not be strictly parallel with the position and duties of an official servant of Christ, yet there is sufficient in common for the former to help us understand the latter. While on the one hand the “lord chamberlain” has to be regulated by certain general rules and well-established precedents, yet on the other hand he is far more than an automaton mechanically acting according to a written code. As one qualified for his position, he is allowed considerable freedom in making many arrangements for the Royal household; nevertheless, he is *not* free to act arbitrarily or follow naught but his own preferences. No, that which regulates him is the well-being of his august master: he plans and arranges so as to please him, to promote his comfort, to serve his interests and honour; and when he is in doubt as to his procedure, consults the king to ascertain his will.

Analogous is the position occupied by the pastor of a local church. “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (Matt. 24:45, 46). Note carefully the following points in this passage. First, the use of *the singular number*: one servant for each local household! Second, that this servant is made “ruler over the” household! Third, that he is given that position for the purpose of supplying them “meat in due season,” which, in its wider signification, means to superintend all the arrangements, to care for all its members, to protect and promote their well-being. Christ does not call dolts and idiots to occupy this place, but men endowed with good common sense, to which He graciously adds spiritual wisdom and discernment.

Now the ruler of Christ’s household is neither a supreme sovereign or pope, nor a mere figurehead without freedom of action. He, in turn, is the servant, responsible to Him, there to uphold His honour, care for those who are precious in His sight, and to whom he must yet render a full account of his stewardship. Therefore, while on the one hand he must act within the bounds of certain general rules and principles prescribed for his conduct, and must not introduce anything which would dishonour his royal Master or be inimical to His interests; yet on the other hand he is required to use his own judgment in applying those general rules to particular cases and to make whatever minor arrangements he deems most for his Master’s glory and the good of His household; and when he is in doubt as to his right or best course, it is his privilege to plead and count upon the promise of James 1:5.

To extend our analogy one point further. As the “lord chamberlain” has other servants under him to assist in the discharge of his honourable duties, servants who co-operate with him by carrying out his instructions, so Christ has provided the pastor of a local church with deacons, and, as many think, with “ruling elders” (or where the church is a large one—as with the case with many of those in apostolic times—with fellow-pastors or “elders”), to help him in his official duties. So that when our text says “obey them that have the rule over you” it takes in *all* the officers of the local church, whatever be the technical names they now go under. These additional church officers not only provide assistance for the chief ruler, but they also serve as a check upon him, for if they be endowed with the qualifications specified in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, they will not be a party to anything which is obviously dishonouring to Christ.

If it be true (as many students of Scripture have concluded) that the seven Epistles of Revelation 2 and 3 furnish a prophetic outline of the ecclesiastical history of Christendom, then it appears that the trend of church government has passed from one extreme to another, from Nicolaitanism (Rev. 2:6, 15), which signifies *the subjugation of the laity*, to Laodiceanism (Rev. 3:14) which means *the domination of the laity*. Nor need this surprise us, for the same change has taken place in the political and social order. It is indeed striking to observe how close is the resemblance between them. The development of Nonconformity and the rapid spread of Independency in the religious world was quickly followed by the rebellion of the American colonies and the formation of Republics in the U.S.A. and in France. Side by side with the growth of a democratic spirit in the churches, has been the spread of “socialism” in the state, the one more and more reacting on the other.

One of the most radical and far-reaching movements of the last century was that which sought to obliterate all distinctions between the clergy and the laity, establishing a network of “assemblies” all over the English-speaking world, wherein there are (professedly) no officers, where a one-man-ministry is decried, and where the Spirit is (avowedly) free to use whom He pleases. This modern movement also claims to be founded entirely upon the Scriptures, yea, insisting that all other bodies of professing Christians are the daughters of Rome and form part of that mystical and apostate Babylon from which God commands His people to come out. This movement has also split up into scores of conflicting parties, each claiming to be the only one which truly “represents” the Body of Christ on earth. But enough; let us now come to closer grips with our text.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). In these words respect is had to the ministerial office. To bear “rule” intimates both the duty and dignity of Christ’s official servants. God has graciously appointed them to subserve His honour by maintaining decency and order in His churches, and because they are necessary and for the good of His people. To obey and submit to their spiritual leaders is what church members are here exhorted unto. In verse 7 the Apostle made known the particular duties unto those of their guides who had finished their course; here he pressed upon them their obligations toward those who were still with them in the body. To ignore those rules or to rebel against their authority, is to despise the One who has appointed them.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.” It is abundantly clear from these words that in the days of the Apostles there were two distinct classes among

God's people, namely, the rulers and those that were ruled, and as this is not merely an historical statement but a specific exhortation, it is equally clear that the same is binding upon Christians throughout the entire course of this dispensation. This, of course, presupposes a settled church state among them, in which the distinctive duties of each class is here distinctly defined, according to the office of the one and the obligation of the other. The duties here prescribed contain a succinct summary of all that relates to church rule and order, for all that concerns its welfare is comprised in the due obedience of the church to its rulers, and their due discharge of their office.

The Greek word for "them that have the rule over you" ("hageomai") is rendered "chief" in Luke 22:26 and "governor" in Acts 7:10—"and he (Pharaoh) made him (Joseph) *governor* over Egypt and all his house," which sufficiently intimates its scope. They have received power from Christ to preside over His assemblies, to declare His will and execute His laws, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all authority and longsuffering. They have no arbitrary power except what Christ has given them, yet within the limits He has prescribed, they are *rulers*, and it is the duty of their members to obey them. "It is of equal importance that the office-bearers in a church should not aspire to a higher degree of authority, and should not be content with a lower degree of authority, than which their Master has assigned them; and that the members of a church should equally guard against basely submitting to a tyranny which Christ has never instituted, and lawlessly rebelling against a government which He has appointed" (John Brown).

John Owen declared that the twofold duty enjoined here with respect to the ecclesiastical leaders has respect unto the two parts of their office, namely, teaching and ruling: "obey their teaching and submit to their rule." While it be true that their doctrine or preaching is to be obeyed (so far as it accords with the Truth), and that their authority is to be yielded unto as it respects their ordering of the church's life, yet we rather regard the two exhortations as having *distributive* force, the second amplifying the first. The word "obey" in our text means an obedience which follows a being persuaded: the mind is first carried along with the preacher so that it believes, and then the will acts—note the marginal alternative in Acts 5:36 for "obeyed" is "believed." "And submit yourselves" seems to us to have reference unto the *spirit* in which they were to obey—obedience was not to be merely an outward act, but prompted by submissive hearts.

Thus, we take it that "obey them that have the rule over you" is not to be restricted to their teaching (John Owen defined it), but includes their ruling of the church as well; while the "submit yourselves" has a wider significance than yielding to their rule, referring to the spirit which was to regulate the whole of their obedience. As Calvin well expressed it, "He commands first obedience and then honour to be rendered to them. These two things are necessarily required, so that the people might have confidence in their pastors, and also reverence them. But it ought at the same time to be noticed that the Apostle speaks only of those who *faithfully* performed their office; for they who have nothing but the title, nay, who use the title of pastors for the purpose of destroying the Church, deserve but little reverence and still less confidence. And this also is what the Apostle plainly sets forth when he says that they *watch* for their souls—a duty which is not performed but by those who are faithful rulers."

The duty here enjoined, then, may be summed up in: cultivate an obedient, compliant, and submissive spirit unto your pastors and church officers. To "obey" and "submit" denotes such a subjection as of inferiors to superiors. It is not a servile subjection, but that

reverent respect which God requires, a "submission" which issues from love, and which has for its end the honouring of those to whom honor is due. It would therefore include the doing of everything in the power of the members which would make the lot of their rulers easier and lighter, and, of course, would take in the providing for their temporal sustenance. Those rulers are appointed by God, standing in His immediate stead, so that the Lord Christ declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth him that sent Me" (John 13:20).

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." It scarcely needs pointing out that those words are *not* to be taken absolutely, any more than are "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (Rom. 13:1) or "As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Eph 5:24). Each of these exhortations is qualified by others; the members of a Gospel church are no more required to receive the pastor's teaching when it be flagrantly opposed to Holy Writ, or to submit to any ruling of his which is manifestly dishonouring to Christ and injurious to His people, than they are to yield to a mandate of Nebuchadnezzar if he sets up an image to himself and commands all to fall down and worship it, or if an ungodly husband required from his wife anything contrary to the laws of nature. No, it is not a blind and implicit obedience which is here enjoined, for that should be quite contrary to the whole tenor of Gospel obedience, which is "our *reasonable* service."

The subjection required by our text is only unto that *office* established by Christ Himself. If any usurp that office, and under cloak thereof do teach or enjoin things contrary to what Christ has instituted, then no obedience unto them is required by this command. But it is just at this point that most difficulty is experienced today. For many years past large numbers of professing Christians have been demanding that the religious leaders should speak unto them "smooth things," yea, prophesy unto them "deceits," declining to listen unto what condemned their carnal and worldly lives and refusing to heed the holy requirements of God. In consequence, He has suffered their descendants to reap the evil sowings of their fathers, by largely withholding "pastors after His own heart," and allowing thousands of unregenerate men to occupy the modern pulpit. Instead of "obeying" and "submitting" to *them*, God requires His people to turn away from and have nothing to do with them.

The true servants of Christ are to be identified by the marks specified in 1 Timothy 3. They are men who are "apt to teach," being qualified by the Spirit to open up the Scriptures and apply them to the consciences and lives of their hearers. They are "not greedy of filthy lucre" nor "covetous," demanding a salary which would enable them to live above the level of their members, and declining to serve if there were no pay attached to it. "Not a novice," with little or no experience in the spiritual ups and downs of God's tried people, but one who has himself tested and proved the reliability and sufficiency of what he recommends to his hearers. He must be a man who is "not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine," but "a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate" (Titus 1:7, 8), or otherwise he could not commend what he teaches by *his own example*. The servants of Christ, then, are endued with a measure of the spirit of their Master, and it is by *that* they are to be distinguished from the false.

To refuse obedience and submission unto such, to contemptuously rail against "the one man system," is to despise a Divine institution, for the office of the "pastor" is as much the Lord's own appointment as is the church itself, or the gifts and graces of its in-

dividual members. It is true that men will and do abuse the good gifts of God, but if some pastors are arbitrary, are not some members unruly? If there be pride in the pulpit, is there none in the pew? Alas, in this Laodicean and communistic age, when it has become the fashion to "despise dominion and speak evil of dignities" (Jude 8) and when "the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable" (Isa. 3:5), almost every individual considers himself qualified to judge and direct both civil and ecclesiastical rulers, to prescribe for both state and church, to scrutinize and criticize everything that is being done, and to say what ought to be done. May the Lord have mercy and subdue the turbulent ragings of pride.

"For they watch for your souls" (Heb. 13:17). This is adduced as a reason why we should show proper respect unto Church rulers. "The word used is peculiar unto this place, and it denotes a watchfulness with the greatest care and diligence, and that not without trouble or danger, as Jacob kept and watched the flock of Laban in the night" (John Owen). The true under-shepherds of Christ have no selfish aims, but rather the spiritual and eternal good of those who are entrusted to their care. Many a minister of the Gospel is often awake, burning midnight oil, while the members of his flock are asleep. Many a one can say, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you" (2 Cor. 12:15). The ministerial office is no idle one: it makes demands on heart, mind, and nervous energy, such as none other does.

Here, then, is a motive to move the members to gladly be subservient to their rulers. The more labour anyone undertakes for our sake and the more difficulty and danger he incurs for us, the greater are our obligations to him. Such is the office of bishops or elders; and the heavier the burden they bear, the more honour they deserve. Let, then, our gratitude be evidenced by giving them that which is their due. "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:12, 13). Let us also add that young men aspiring unto the ministerial office need to think twice about entering a calling which demands ceaseless self-sacrifice, unremitting toil, and a love for Christ and His people which alone will sustain amid sore discouragements.

"They watch for your souls as they that must give account" (Heb. 13:7), supplies a further motive. They are placed in a position of trust, commissioned by the Lord, to whom they are immediately responsible. They often render an account to Him now, keeping up a constant intercourse with Him, spreading before Him the state and needs of His people, seeking supplies of grace. A full and final account must be rendered of their stewardship in the Day to come. Unspeakably solemn consideration is *that*, and this it is which actuates them, for they, "watch for the souls of their church *as* they that must give account." They bear in mind the awful warning of Ezekiel 33:5, and seek to heed the exhortations of 1 Timothy 4:16.

"That they may do it with joy, and not with grief" (Heb. 13:17). Here is a further reason why church members should give to their rulers that which is due them. If on the other hand nothing is more encouraging to a pastor than for his people to be responsive and docile, it is equally true that nothing is more disheartening and saddening to him than to meet with opposition from those whose highest interests he is serving with all his might. Every Christian minister who is entitled to that designation, can, in his measure,



say with the Apostle, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4).

"For that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17), furnishes the final motive. For the members of a church to so conduct themselves as to be a constant source of grief unto their minister is to despise their own mercies. It not only prevents their receiving his instruction into their hearts, which results in their spiritual barrenness, but it also saps *his* vigour, quenches his zeal, and causes him to proceed with a heavy heart instead of with cheerfulness. What is still more solemn and serious, the Lord Himself is highly displeased, and the tokens of His favour are withdrawn, for He is very sensitive of the mistreatments of His stewards. "We cannot be troublesome or disobedient to our pastors without hazarding our own salvation" (John Calvin)—alas that such erroneous ideas of "salvation" now so widely obtain. May the Lord mercifully pardon anything in these articles displeasing to Him and graciously add His blessing to that which is acceptable.—A.W.P.

## **The Life of David.**

### *72. His Inordinate Grief.*

Man is a composite creature, possessing a soul as well as a spirit. God has bestowed upon him an emotional nature as well as a rational principle. True, in some persons the passions are much stronger, while in others the intellectual faculty is more prominent; but whichever be the case, we should seek to preserve the balance between their play and interplay. The emotions must not be allowed to run away with us, for if they do we shall be incapacitated for clear thinking and prudent acting. On the other hand, the emotions are not to be utterly crushed, or we shall degenerate into callous cynics and cold intellectual machines. There is a happy medium between epicurianism and stoicism, yet it can only be attained by constant watchfulness and self-discipline. The regular management of our unruly passion is essential if we are to obtain the mastery of them, and not be mastered by them.

Stoicism or the complete suppression of our emotions receives no countenance from the teachings of Holy Writ. How could it, seeing that the Author of Scripture is the One who has endowed us with an emotional nature! God's Word and His works do not contradict each other. Let it be remembered that it is recorded of the Perfect Man that He *wept* by the graveside of Lazarus and made lamentation over the doomed city of Jerusalem. He who created muscles in the face which are only called into action by a hearty laugh and a tear duct for the eye, meant that each should be used in their season. They who are physically incapable of breaking out into a healthy sweat, suffer far more than those who perspire freely in hot weather; and they who weep not when a great sorrow overtakes them, incur the danger of something snapping in their brains. Laughter and tears are nature's safety valves; they ease nervous tension, much as an electric storm relieves a heavily-charged atmosphere.

Nevertheless, it remains that our emotions are to be disciplined and regulated. "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Prov. 4:23): an essential part of the task that involves is the government of our passions and emotions—anger is to be curbed, impatience subdued, covetousness checked, grief and joy tempered. One of the things we are bidden to mortify is "inordinate affection" (Col. 3:5), and that includes not only unholy lustings, but also excessive desires after lawful things. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2): that does not mean it is wrong for us to have any love for earthly objects, but it does mean that such love is to be regulated and subordinated to Divine and spiritual things. Responsibility attaches as much to our inner life as it does to our outward.

Rejoicing and merrymaking are seasonable at a wedding or a birth, while grief and lamentation are natural at the death of a loved one; yet even on such occasions we are required to hold our emotions within due bounds. If on the one hand we are bidden to "rejoice with trembling" (Psa. 2:11), on the other hand we are exhorted to "sorrow not, even as others who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). The subject is admittedly a delicate one, yet is it one of practical importance. Intemperate grief is as unjustifiable as is intemperate joy. The hand of God is to be viewed in that which occasions the one as truly as that which occasions the other: if He is the One who gives, He is equally the One who takes away; and the more the heart recognizes this, the less likely are we to overstep the bounds of propriety by yielding to uncontrolled passion.

That God takes notice of inordinate grief may be seen from the case of Samuel mourning for Saul. Samuel is one of the brightest characters of which we have recorded in Scripture, yet he failed at this point. The thought of God's having rejected Saul from being king so moved the bowels of natural affection in the Prophet that he sat up all night weeping for him (1 Sam. 15:11), yea, he continued mourning until the reproof of Heaven stopped the torrent of his tears. "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?" (1 Sam. 16:1)—had such grief been acceptable to God, He surely had not rebuked him for the same! This incident is recorded for our learning and warning.

The hour of emergency is what usually brings to light that which is to be found within us. It is not the ordinary routine of life, but *the crises* which reveal character: not that the crisis changes or makes the man, but rather that it affords opportunity to display the benefits of previous discipline or the evils of the lack of the same. Therefore it is of little or no use to bid a person control himself or herself when deeply agitated over an unusual experience, for one who has never learned to govern himself day by day, cannot begin doing so under exceptional circumstances. Here, then, is the answer to the question, How am I, especially if of a passionate nature, to *avoid* inordinate joy or sorrow? A person cannot change his disposition, but he can greatly modify it, if he will take pains to that end.

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32): it is this ruling of our spirits which is the subject we are attempting to develop: the mind perceiving the needs and the will exerting itself to govern our emotions. Inordinate grief is the outcome of inordinate love, and therefore we need to watch closely over our affections and bring reason to bear upon them. We must discipline ourselves daily and control our emotions over little things, if we are to control ourselves in the crises of life. As the twig is bent, so the bough grows. The longer we allow our passions to run riot, the harder will it be to gain control of them. Much can be done by parents in training the child to exercise self-control and be temperate in all things.

Does not the reader now perceive the practical importance of what has been before us? How many there are who go entirely to pieces when some grief or calamity overtakes them. And why is this? Because they have no self-control: they have never learned to govern their emotions. But *can we* rule our spirits? Certainly; yet not in a moment, nor by spasmodic efforts, but only by the practice of daily and *strict self-discipline*. Form the habit, then, of keeping tab on your desires, and check them immediately you find they are going out after forbidden objects. Watch your affections, and bring reason to bear upon them: see that they do not become too deeply attached to anything down here: remember the more highly you prize an object, the more keenly will you feel the loss of it. Seek to cultivate a mild and even disposition, and when provoked, assure yourself such a trifle is unworthy of perturbation. Paul could say, "all things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12)—that was *his own* determination.

The pertinency of what has been before us will appear as we resume our consideration of David. The reader will remember that we last viewed him disposing of his forces, and then commanding his generals "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom" (2 Sam. 18:1-5). Two things are to be noted. First, David was under no qualms of the issue of the conflict, no fear that the battle would go against him. As we pointed

out in a previous article, the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> Psalms (composed at this time) show that he had overcome his despondency and doubts, and again had confidence in God. Second, we behold again the doting father: not only in referring to Absalom as “the young man” (He had had at least four children: 2 Sam. 14:27), but in laying such an unlawful charge upon his officers he allowed sentiment to override the requirements of righteousness.

“And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone” (2 Sam. 18:24). What a pathetic picture is presented here: the aged king and tender parent anxiously waiting for news? He must have known, deep down in his heart, that the Providence of God would execute that just punishment which he had been too weak to inflict upon the evil doer; yet, doubtless, he hoped against hope that the guilty one would escape. Moreover, as he sat there with plenty of time for meditation, he must have reflected upon *his own sins*, and how they were responsible for this unhappy conflict, which seriously threatened to permanently split the Nation into two opposing factions. If only we would look ahead more and anticipate the consequences of our actions, how often we should be deterred from entering upon a mad and sinful course.

“And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near. And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings” (vv. 25, 26). Within a short time at most the king’s anxiety was to be relieved, and he would know the best or the worst. When the watchman upon the walls reported that a single runner was approaching, followed by another lone individual, David knew that his forces had not been defeated, for in that case, his men had fled before the enemy in confusion, and had come back in scattered groups. These persons were evidently special messengers, bringing report to the king: God had prohibited the multiplying of horses in Israel, so that these couriers come on foot.

“And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings” (v. 27). It will be remembered that Joab had first dispatched Cushie and then had yielded to the importunity of Ahimaaz to follow him, but the latter taking a short cut and being the swifter of the two, “overran Cushie” (v. 23). Upon hearing that the son of the priest was approaching, David concluded he was the bearer of favourable news. As other writers have pointed out, this illustrates an important principle: those who bear good tidings should themselves be good men. Alas, what incalculable harm has often been wrought and the Gospel brought into contempt by the inconsistent and worldly lives of many who proclaim it. How needful it is that the servants of Christ should practice what they preach, and secure the confidence of those who hear them by a reputation for integrity and righteousness. “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works” (Titus 2:7).

“And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king” (v. 28). Truly this was “a good man” indeed, who both feared God and honoured the king (1 Peter 2:17). First, his “all is well” was to assure David that his forces had been successful; then he rendered obeisance to his royal master, and honoured God by ascribing the victory to

Him. This was both pious and prudent, for his words were calculated to turn David's mind from Absalom unto the Lord, who had so mercifully interposed to defeat his counsels. Herein is a most important lesson to be heeded by those who have to break the news of the death of a loved one; seek to direct the heart of the grief-stricken to Him in whose hands alone are "the issues from death" (Psa. 68:20).

"And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still" (vv. 29, 20). David's question showed he was more concerned about the welfare of his wicked son than he was over the well-being of his kingdom; that was natural no doubt, nevertheless it was a serious failure—those who serve the public are often called on to set aside their own private feelings and interests. Ahimaaz avoided giving a direct reply to the king: he was deeply attached to him, and no doubt wished to spare his feelings as far as possible; yet that did not excuse him if he resorted to prevarication. We are never justified in telling an untruth: no, not even to relieve the suspense of an anxious soul or to comfort a bereaved one.

"And, behold, Cushi came; and Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is" (vv. 31, 32). The second courier now arrived and confirmed the word of Ahimaaz that the Lord had graciously undertaken for the king. His language too was pious, though not so fervent as that of the former. It was couched also in general terms, so that David had to repeat the question concerning his son. His query now received a definite reply, though the harrowing details were wisely withheld. Cushi did not mention Joab's having thrust the three darts into Absalom's heart, nor that his body had been contemptuously cast into a pit and covered with a great heap of stones. Instead, he merely intimated that Absalom was now safe in the grave, where he could work no more harm against the kingdom, whither Cushi loyally desired all other traitors might be.

"And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (v. 33). Gratitude that his kingdom had been delivered was completely submerged by overwhelming grief for his wayward child. Probably this was one of the most pathetic lamentations that ever issued from a stricken heart, yet its extravagance and impiety cannot rightly be extenuated. David's inordinate affection for Absalom now found expression in inordinate grief. His passions carried him completely away, so that he spake unadvisedly, rashly, with his lips. No doubt his sorrow was made more poignant by the realization that Absalom's soul was lost, for there is no hint whatever that he sought to make his peace with God; yet that in nowise warranted such an inconsiderate outburst.

Matthew Henry ably analyzed and summarized this sin of David's. "He is to be blamed. 1. For showing so great a fondness for a graceless, however handsome and witty son, that was justly abandoned both of God and of man. 2. For quarreling, not only with Divine Providence, the disposals of which he ought silently to acquiesce in, but Divine justice, the judgments of which he ought to adore and subscribe to: see how Bildad argues, 'If thy children have sinned against Him, and He hath cast them away in their

transgression (thou shouldest submit) for doth God pervert judgment?' (Job 8:3, 4 and compare Lev. 10:3). 3. For opposing the justice of the Nation, which, as king, he was entrusted with the administration of, and which, with other public interests, he ought to prefer before any natural affection.

"4. For despising the mercy of his deliverance, and the deliverance of his family and kingdom from Absalom's wicked designs, as if this were no mercy, nor worth giving thanks for, because it cost the life of Absalom. 5. For indulging a strong passion, and speaking unadvisedly with his lips. He now forgot his own reasoning upon the death of another child (can I bring him back again?) and his own resolution to keep 'his mouth as with bridle when his heart was hot within him'; as well as his own practice at other times, when he 'quieted himself as a child that was weaned from his mother.' "

The practical warnings from this incident are obvious. David had allowed his inordinate affection for Absalom to hinder the discharge of his public duty. First, in failing to inflict the penalty of the Divine Law for Absalom's murder of Ammon. Second, in allowing him to return from banishment. The claims of God must prevail over all natural inclinations: fleshly sentiment, and not a concern for God's glory, moved David to send for his son. As chief magistrate in Israel he condoned his grievous offences. His inordinate love terminated in this inordinate grief. How we need to watch and pray against excessive affection, the indulging of wayward children, and passionate outbursts in times of stress and strain. Doubly we need to keep a strict guard upon ourselves when that is removed from us which is very dear to us: much grace is required to say with Job "Blessed be the name of the LORD" (1:21).—A.W.P.

## The Divine Covenants.

### 6. *The Davidic.*

In last month's article we pointed out that in view of all which has been before us in connection with the earlier covenants, it is but reasonable to expect that the Davidic one also has both a "letter" and "spirit" signification. This expectation is, we believe, capable of clear demonstrations: in their primary and inferior aspects, the promises in 2 Samuel 7:11-16 respected Solomon and his immediate successors, but in their higher and ultimate meaning, they looked forward to Christ and His kingdom. And is not this fact evident from the immediate sequel? Does not that which is recorded in 2 Samuel 7:18-25 plainly intimate that David himself was enabled to perceive the spiritual purport of those promises, that they had to do with Christ Himself? There is not a doubt in the writer's mind that such was the case, and we shall now endeavour to make this clear to the reader.

"Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD" (2 Sam. 7:18). His posture was, we think, indicative of the earnest consideration which David was giving to the message he had just received. As he pondered the Divine promises and surveyed the wondrous riches of Divine grace toward him, he burst forth in self-effacing and God-honouring language; "And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" (v. 18). Why, *his* "house" pertained to the *royal* tribe: he was the direct descendant of the prince of Judah, so that he was connected with one of the most honourable families in all Israel. Yes, but such fleshly distinctions were now held very lightly by him. "Brought me hitherto": why he had been brought to the *throne* itself, and given rest from all his enemies (7:1): yes, but these faded into utter insignificance before the far greater things of which Nathan had prophesied.

"And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord GOD; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord GOD, knowest Thy servant" (2 Sam. 7:19, 20). Here again we see the effect which the Lord's message had wrought upon the mind of David. "He beheld in spirit another Son than Solomon, another temple than one built of stones and cedar, another Kingdom than the earthly one, on whose throne he sat. He perceived a sceptre and a crown of which his own on Mount Zion was only feeble types—dim and shadowy manifestations" (Krummacher's "David and the Godman"). That the patriarch David understood the whole of those promises to receive their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, is evident from his next utterance.

"For Thy Word's sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things, to make Thy servant know them" (v. 21). The reference was to the *personal* Word, Him of whom it is declared, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word 'was God'" (John 1:1); and "according to Thine own heart," meant according to God's gracious counsels. That David was *not* referring to God's spoken or written Word is evident from the fact that nothing of the kind had been uttered to him before, while of the written Word there was no Scripture then extant which predicted Christ, either personal or mystical, under the similitude of a "House." Let it be duly noted that all later references in the Scriptures to Christ under this figure are borrowed from and based upon this very passage. Unto David in vision was then given the first revelation, and hence it is that in that wondrous 89<sup>th</sup> Psalm we have other great features of it more particularly marked.

"I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with My Chosen, I have *sworn* unto David My servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up Thy throne to all generations. Selah" (Psa. 89:1-4). Of *that oath*, God the Holy Spirit was graciously pleased to tell the Church by the mouth of Peter on the day of Pentecost: "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up *Christ* to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:30). Here, then, is the most decided and express proof that not David's son Solomon, nor any of the seed of Adam after the flesh, but to Christ Himself 2 Samuel 7:11-16 definitely alluded. David fully understood it so, that it was of Christ and Him alone the promises referred, and it was this which so overwhelmed his mind and moved him to burst forth with such expressions of humility.

What has just been before us supplies an illustration of the fact that all the patriarchs and saints of Old Testament times lived and died *in the faith of Christ*: "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Heb. 11:13). Hence it was that by faith, with an eye to Christ, Abel offered unto God an acceptable sacrifice. Hence by faith, Noah prepared an ark, as beholding Christ set forth therein as a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the tempest. Hence too, by faith Abraham offered up his only-begotten son, expressly with an eye to the offering of God's only-begotten Son in the fullness of time. Therefore it was that David eyed Christ in the promises of God to build him an house, in the confidence whereof he took comfort amidst all the sad circumstances of himself and his children (2 Sam. 23:5).

These holy men of old, and all the faithful in each generation of the Church before the coming of Christ, lived in the blessed assurance of that faith. They beheld the promises afar off, yet that did not have the slightest effect in lessening their conviction in the veracity of them. Their faith gave to them a present subsistence: it substantiated and realized them, as if those saints had the fulfillment in actual possession, just as a powerful telescope will bring near to the eye objects far remote. Their faith gave as great an assurance of the reality of what God promised as though they had lived in the day when the Son of God became incarnate and tabernacled among men. In like manner, it is only by the exercise of a similar faith that we can now have a real knowledge of Christ by union and communion with Him.

Before we give further consideration to the contents of Psalm 89—which supplies a Divine exposition of the promises made to David in 2 Samuel 7—we must first turn again to Psalm 2. As C. H. Spurgeon said in his introductory remarks thereon, "We shall not greatly err in our summary of this sublime Psalm if we call it 'The psalm of Messiah the Prince,' for it sets forth, as in a wondrous vision, the tumult of the people against the Lord's Anointed, the determinate purpose of God to exalt His own Son, and the ultimate reign of that Son over all His enemies. Let us read it with the eye of faith, beholding, as in a glass, the final triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ over all His enemies."

This second Psalm is divided into four sections of three verses each. The first tells of the widespread opposition to the kingdom and government of Christ: His enemies cannot endure His yoke and they rebel against His commandments; these verses (1-3) were applied by Peter under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the opposition which



Christ met with and the indignities that He suffered at the hands of the Jews and Gentiles (see Acts 4:24-27). The second section of it reveals God's utter contempt of those who sought to thwart His purpose: He derides their foolish counsels and puny efforts, and makes known the accomplishment of His will. He does not smite them, but gallingly announces that He has performed what they sought to prevent. "While they are proposing, He has disposed the matter. Jehovah's will is done, and so man's will frets and fumes in vain. God's Anointed is appointed, and shall not be disappointed" (C.H. Spurgeon).

"Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psa. 2:6). It is the investiture of Christ in His kingly office which is here in view. Just as Jehovah defeated the efforts of all his enemies and set the son of Jesse on the throne, making him king in Jerusalem over all Israel, so He raised His own Son from the dead, exalted Him as Head of the Church, and seated Him as victorious King upon His mediatorial throne, and therefore did the risen Redeemer declare, "all power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Scholars tell us that "Zion" is derived from "tzun," which means "a monument raised up." Such indeed is the Church of God: a monument of *grace* now, and of *glory* hereafter; raised up to all eternity. It was there that Solomon built the temple, a type also of Christ's mystical Body. Hence, when we read, "The LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it" (Isa. 14:32), when we hear Him saying, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isa. 28:16—the Holy Spirit moving an Apostle to tell the Church that this is Christ: 1 Peter 2:6-8), and when with the eye of faith we behold "a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1), who can refrain from exclaiming "Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion" (Psa. 65:1)?

It seems strange that any should question the fact, or, shall we say, challenge the statement, that even now the Lord Jesus is King and discharging His royal office. The whole burden of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the proffering of proof that He is Priest "after the order of Melchizedek": that is, Priest-King. Collateral confirmation of this is found in the statement that believers are "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), and they are so only because of their union with the antitypical Melchizedek. Christ has already been "crowned," not with an earthly or material diadem, but "with glory and with honour" (Heb. 2:9). He has "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," and therefore is He "upholding all things by the Word of His Power" (Heb. 1:3). The "sceptre of righteousness" is wielded by Him (Heb. 1:8), "ambassadors" have been sent forth by Him (2 Cor. 5:20), and both men and angels are subject to Him.

Christ is the King of His *enemies*, and He shall reign till He has placed the last of them beneath His feet. "Who would not fear Thee, O King *of nations*?" (Jer. 10:7). True, many of them do not own His sceptre, yea, some deny His very being, nevertheless He is their Sovereign, "the Prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5), and this because God has already "highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). This was the reward for His sufferings: the head that once was crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now; a royal diadem adorns the mighty Victor's brow. "He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16). Ah, my reader, what are all the great, the mighty, and honourable men of the earth in comparison with Him who is "the *only* Potentate" (1 Tim. 6:15)?

Again: Christ is King *of the Church*: “The King of *saints*” (Rev. 15:3). He is King of the evil and King of the good: He is King *over* the former, He is King *in* the latter. Christ rules over the wicked by His might and power; He rules *in* the righteous by His Spirit and grace. This latter is His spiritual kingdom, where He reigns in the hearts of His own, where His sovereignty is acknowledged, His sceptre kissed, His laws heeded. This is brought about by the miracle of regeneration, whereby lawless rebels are transformed into loyal subjects. As the King of Zion, Christ exercises His royal authority by appointing officers, both ordinary and extraordinary, for His Church: see Ephesians 4:11, 12. It is the prerogative of the king to nominate and call those who serve him in the government of his kingdom: this Christ does. He also exerts His royal authority by ordering His officers in their governing of His subjects to teach no other things than those He has commanded (Matt. 28:19). O that both writer and reader may render to Him that allegiance and fealty which are His due.

Finally, be it noted that Christ is *the Father's* King, and this in at least three respects. First, by the Father's *appointing*: “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me” (Luke 22:29). Christ is eminently qualified to bear the government upon His shoulder, and being infinitely dear to the Father, this honour He delighted to confer upon Him. Second, by the Father's *investiture*: “I have set *My* King upon *My* holy hill of Zion” (Psa. 2:6). God has entrusted Christ with the sole administration of government and judgment: “And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man” (John 5:27). Third, because Christ rules *for* His Father: to fulfill His purpose, to glorify His name. That Christ rules for His Father is clear from, “Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1 Cor. 15:24). It is the Father's kingdom, and therefore do we pray “Thy kingdom come,” i.e., in its fuller open manifestation; yet it is the Son's kingdom (Col. 1:16) because administered by Him.

Christ's power as the King of Zion is absolute and universal. Alas that this is now so dimly perceived and so feebly apprehended by many of those bearing His name. Dispensationalists will have much to answer for in the coming Day, for by denying His present Kingship, postponing His rule unto “the millennium,” they both rob Him of His personal honours and deprive us of precious comfort. Christ is sovereign Supreme over all creatures. He bridles both man and demons, saying to them, as He does to the proud waves of the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further. As the King of Zion, Christ has His chain about the necks of Satan and all his wicked instruments, and when they have gone their appointed lengths, they are obliged to stop. We see this in the case of Job; when the Devil was permitted to harass him, he went only so far as his chain allowed. So it is now.

This royal and absolute power of Christ He is exercising in *protecting* His Church in the midst of grave and imminent dangers. A vivid portrayal of this was made unto Moses when Christ appeared to him in the burning bush: he saw the bush burning in the midst of the fire, yet it was not consumed. That represented the situation of the Church in Egypt at that time: under the tyranny of most cruel taskmasters, lorded over by Pharaoh who hated them and thirsted for their annihilation. Yet under the care of Christ, He delivered them from being swallowed up by their enemies. This He has done in all ages, shielding His people when their foes threatened to swallow them up.

In the third section of Psalm 2 Christ is heard declaring His sovereign rights, with the Father's response thereto. We would recommend those who have access to the works of

John Newton to read his sermon on Psalm 2:9. Therein he has shown how that, since Christ's enemies will not submit to the golden sceptre of His grace, they are under His iron rod. This iron rule over them consists, first, in the certain and inseparable connection He has established between sin and misery: where the Lord does not dwell, peace will not inhabit. Second, in His power over conscience: what awful thoughts and fears sometimes awaken them in the silent hours of the night! Third, in that terrible blindness and hardness of heart to which some sinners are given up. But our space is exhausted.—A.W.P.

### Signs of the Times.

No, let us assure the spiritual reader at the outset that we are not going to waste his time nor our space by a consideration of the latest doings of Hitler, [this was written in 1937] Mussolini, and Co. "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth" (Isa. 45:9): the child of God has nothing to do with *their* activities. It is something far more solemn than anything occurring in the political realm that we are now going to write upon, namely, *the soul-deceiving character* of most of the "Evangelism" of this degenerate and apostate generation.

It is generally recognized that *spirituality* is at a low ebb in Christendom, and not a few perceive that *sound doctrine* is rapidly on the wane, yet many of the Lord's people take comfort from supposing that the Gospel is still being widely preached and that large numbers are being saved thereby. Alas, their optimistic supposition is ill-founded and grounded in sand. If the "message" now being delivered in Mission Halls be examined, if the "tracts" which are scattered among the unchurched masses be scrutinized, if the "open air" speakers be carefully listened to, if the "sermons" or "addresses" of a "Soul-winning campaign" be analyzed; in short, if modern "Evangelism" be weighed in the balances of Holy Writ, it will be found wanting—*lacking* that which is vital to a genuine conversion, *lacking* what is essential if sinners are to be shown their need of a Saviour, *lacking* that which will produce the transfigured lives of new creatures in Christ Jesus.

It is in no captious spirit that we write, seeking to make a man an offender for a word. It is not that we are looking for perfection, and complain because we cannot find it; nor that we criticise others because they are not doing things as *we* think they should be done. No; no, it is a matter far more serious than that. The "evangelism" of the day is not only superficial to the last degree, but it is *radically defective*. It is utterly lacking a foundation on which to base an appeal for sinners to come to Christ. There is not only a lamentable lack of proportion (the mercy of God being made far more prominent than His holiness, His love than His wrath), but there is a *fatal omission* of that which God has given for the purpose of imparting a knowledge of sin. There is not only reprehensible introducing of "bright singing," humorous witticisms and entertaining anecdotes, but there is a *studied omission of the dark background* upon which alone the Gospel can effectually shine forth.

But serious indeed as is the above indictment, it is only half of it—the negative side, that which is *lacking*. Worse still is that which is being retailed by the cheap-jerk evangelists of the day. The *positive content* of their message is nothing but a throwing of dust in the eyes of the sinner. His soul is put to sleep by the Devil's opiate, ministered in a most unsuspecting form. Those who really receive the "message" which is now being given out from most of the "orthodox" pulpits and platforms today are being fatally deceived. It is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but unless God sovereignly intervenes by a miracle of grace, all who follow it will surely find that the ends thereof are the ways of death. Ten of thousands who confidently imagine they are bound for Heaven will get a terrible disillusionment when they awake in Hell.

*What is the Gospel?* Is it a message of glad tidings from Heaven to make God-defying rebels at ease in their wickedness? Is it given for the purpose of assuring the pleasure-crazy young people that, providing they only "believe" there is nothing for them to fear in the future? One would certainly think so from the way in which the Gospel is presented—or rather perverted—by most of the "evangelists," and the more so when we

look at *the lives* of their “converts.” Surely those with any degree of spiritual discernment must perceive that to assure such that God loves them and His Son died for them, and that a full pardon for all their sins (past, present, and future) can be obtained by simply “accepting Christ as their personal Saviour,” is but a casting of pearls before swine.

*The Gospel is not a thing apart.* It is not something independent of the prior revelation of God’s Law. It is not an announcement that God has relaxed His justice or lowered the standard of His holiness. So far from that, when *Scripturally expounded* the Gospel presents the clearest demonstration and the most positive proof of the inexorableness of God’s justice and of His infinite abhorrence of sin. But for Scripturally expounding the Gospel, beardless youths and businessmen who devote their spare time to “evangelistic effort,” are *quite unqualified*. Alas that the pride of the flesh suffers so many incompetent ones to rush in where those much wiser fear to tread. It is this multiplying of novices that is largely responsible for the woeful situation now confronting us, and because the “churches” and “assemblies” are so largely filled with *their* “converts,” explains why they are so unspiritual and worldly.

No, my reader, the Gospel is very, very far from making light of sin. It reveals to us the terrible sword of His justice smiting His beloved Son in order that atonement might be made for the transgressions of His people. So far from the Gospel setting aside the Law, it exhibits the Saviour enduring the curse of it. Calvary supplied the most solemn and awe-inspiring display of *God’s hatred of sin* that time or eternity will ever furnish. And do you imagine that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to worldlings and telling them that they “may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their personal Saviour” *while they are* wedded to their idols and their hearts still in love with sin? If I do so, I tell them *a lie*, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

No doubt some readers are ready to object to our “harsh” and “sarcastic” statements above by asking, When the question was put “What must I do to be saved?” did not an inspired Apostle expressly say “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved?” Can we err, then, if *we* tell sinners the same thing today? Have we not Divine warrant for so doing? True, those words are found in Holy Writ, and because they *are*, many superficial and untrained people conclude they are justified in repeating them to all and sundry. But let it be pointed out that Acts 16:31 was not addressed to a promiscuous multitude, but *to a particular individual*, which at once intimates that it is *not* a message to be indiscriminately sounded forth, but rather a special word, to those *whose characters correspond* to the one to whom it was first spoken.

Verses of Scripture must not be wrenched from their setting, but weighed, interpreted, and applied *in accord with their context*; and *that* calls for prayerful consideration, careful meditation, and prolonged study; and it is failure at *this* point which accounts for these shoddy and worthless “messages” of this rush-ahead age. Look at the context of Acts 16:31, and what do we find? What was the occasion, and *to whom* was it that the Apostle and his companion said “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”? A sevenfold answer is there furnished, which supplies a striking and complete delineation of the character of those to whom we are warranted in giving this truly evangelistic word. As we briefly names these seven details, let the reader carefully *ponder* them.

First, the man to whom those words were spoken had just witnessed *the miracle-working power of God*. “And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the founda-

tions of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (Acts 16:26). Second, in consequence thereof, the man was deeply stirred, even to the point of self-despair: "He drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled" (v. 27). Third, he felt *the need of illumination*: "Then he called for a light" (v. 29). Fourth, his *self-complacency was utterly shattered*, for he "came trembling" (v. 29). Fifth, he took his proper place (before God)—*in the dust*, for he "fell down before Paul and Silas" (v. 29). Sixth, he showed respect and *consideration for God's servants*, for he "brought them out" (v. 30). Seventh, then, with *a deep concern for his soul*, he asked "what must I do to be saved?"

Here, then, is something definite for our guidance—if we are willing to be guided. It was no giddy, careless, unconcerned person, who was exhorted to "simply" believe; but instead, one who gave clear evidence that a mighty work of God had already been wrought within him. He was *an awakened soul* (v. 27). In *his* case there was no need to press upon him his lost condition, for obviously he felt it; nor were the apostles required to urge upon him the duty of repentance, for his entire demeanour betokened his contrition. But to apply the words spoken to *him* unto those who are totally blind to their depraved state and completely dead toward God, would be more foolish than placing a bottle of smelling-salts to the nose of one who had just been dragged unconscious out of the water. Let the critic of this article read carefully through the Acts and see if he can find a single instance of the Apostles addressing a promiscuous audience or a company of idolatrous heathen and "simply" telling them to believe in Christ.

Just as the world was not ready for the New Testament before it received the Old, just as the Jews were not prepared for the ministry of Christ until John the Baptist had gone before Him with his call to repentance, so the unsaved are in no condition today for the Gospel till *the Law* be applied to their hearts, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). It is a waste of time to sow seed on ground which has never been plowed or spaded! To present the vicarious sacrifice of Christ to those whose dominant passion is to take their fill of sin, is to give that which is holy unto the dogs. What the unconverted need to hear about is the character of Him with whom they have to do, His claim upon them, His righteous demands, and the infinite enormity of disregarding Him and going on their own way.

*The nature of Christ's salvation* is woefully misrepresented by the present-day "evangelist." He announces a Saviour from Hell, rather than a Saviour from *sin*. And that is why so many are fatally deceived, for there are multitudes who wish to escape the Lake of Fire who have no desire to be delivered from their carnality and worldliness. The very first thing said of Him in the New Testament is, "thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save His people (*not* "from the wrath to come," but) *from their sins*" (Matt. 1:21). Christ is a Saviour for those realizing something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, who fell the awful burden of it on their conscience, so loathe themselves for it, who long to be freed from its terrible dominion; and a Saviour *for no others*. Were He to "save from Hell" those who were still in love with sin, He would be the Minister of sin, condoning their wickedness and siding with them against God. What an unspeakably horrible and blasphemous thing with which to charge the Holy One!

Should the reader exclaim, *I* was not conscious of the heinousness of sin nor bowed down with a sense of my guilt when Christ saved me, then we unhesitatingly reply, Either you have never been saved at all, or you were not saved as early as you supposed. True,

as the Christian grows in grace he has a clearer realization now what sin is—rebellion against God—and a deeper hatred of and sorrow for it: but to think that one may be saved by Christ whose conscience has never been smitten by the Spirit and whose heart has not been made contrite before God, is to imagine something which has no existence whatever in the realm of fact. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matt. 9:12): the only ones who really seek relief from the Great Physician are they that are *sick of sin*—who long to be delivered from its God-dishonouring works and its soul-defiling pollutions.

Inasmuch, then, as Christ’s salvation is a salvation from sin—from the love of it, from its dominion, from its guile and penalty—then it necessarily follows that the first great task and the chief work of the evangelist is to preach upon SIN: to define what sin (as distinct from crime) really is, to show wherein its infinite enormity consists; to trace out its manifold workings in the heart; to indicate that nothing less than eternal punishment is its desert. Ah, and preaching upon *sin*—not merely uttering a few platitudes concerning it, but devoting sermon after sermon to explaining what sin is *in the light of God*—will not make him popular nor draw the crowds, will it? No, it will not, and knowing this, those who love the praise of men more than the approbation of God, and who value their salary above immortal souls, trim their sails accordingly. “But such preaching *will* drive people away!” We answer, Far better drive the people away by faithful preaching than *drive the Holy Spirit away* by unfaithfully pandering to the flesh.

*The terms of Christ’s salvation* are erroneously stated by the present-day evangelist. With very rare exceptions he tells his hearers that salvation is by grace and is received as a free gift; that Christ has done everything *for the sinner*, and nothing remains but for him to “believe”—to trust in the infinite merits of His blood. And so widely does this conception now prevail in “orthodox” circles, so frequently has it been dinned in their ears, so deeply has it taken root in their minds, that for one to now challenge it and denounce it as being so inadequate and one-sided as to be *deceptive and erroneous*, is for him to instantly court the stigma of being a heretic, and to be charged with dishonouring the finished work of Christ by inculcating salvation by works. Yet notwithstanding, the writer is quite prepared to run that risk.

Salvation *is* by grace, by grace *alone*, for a fallen creature cannot possibly do anything to merit God’s approval or earn His favour. Nevertheless, Divine grace is not exercised at the expense of holiness, for it never compromises with sin. It is also true that salvation is a free gift, but an *empty* hand must receive it, and not a hand which still tightly grasps the world! But it is *not* true that “Christ has done everything for the sinner.” He did not fill the sinner’s belly with the husks which the swine eat and find them unable to satisfy. He has not turned the sinner’s back on the far country, arisen, gone to the Father, and acknowledged his sins—those are acts *which the sinner himself must perform*. True, he will not be saved *for* the performance of them, yet it is equally true that he cannot be saved *without* the performance of them—any more than the prodigal could receive the Father’s kiss and ring while he still remained at a guilty distance from Him!

Something more than “believing” is necessary to salvation. A heart that is steeled in rebellion against God cannot savingly believe: it must first be broken. It is written “except ye *repent*, ye shall likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is just as essential as faith, yea, the latter cannot be without the former: “Repented not afterward, *that ye might believe*” (Matt. 21:32). The order is clearly enough laid down by Christ: “Repent ye, and

believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). Repentance is sorrowing for sin. Repentance is a heart-repudiation of sin. Repentance is a heart determination to forsake sin. And where there is true repentance grace is free to act, for the requirements of holiness are conserved when sin is renounced. Thus, it is the duty of the evangelist to cry “Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD (from whom he departed in Adam), and He will have mercy upon him” (Isa 55:7). His task is to call on his hearers to lay down the weapons of their warfare against God, and then to sue for mercy through Christ.

*The way of salvation* is falsely defined. In most instances the modern “evangelist” assures his congregation that *all* any sinner has to do in order to escape Hell and make sure of Heaven is to “receive Christ as his personal Saviour.” But such teaching is utterly misleading. No one can receive Christ as Saviour while he *rejects Him as Lord*. It is true the preacher adds that the one who accepts Christ should also surrender to Him as Lord, but he at once spoils it by asserting that though the convert fails to do so, nevertheless Heaven is sure to him. That is one of the Devil’s lies. Only those who are spiritually blind would declare that Christ will save any who despise His authority and refuse His yoke: why, my reader, *that* would not be grace but a *disgrace*—charging Christ with placing a premium on lawlessness.

It is in His office *of Lord* that Christ maintains God’s honour, subserves His government, enforces His Law; and if the reader will turn to those passages—Luke 1:46, 47; Acts 5:31; 2 Peter 1:11, 2:20, 3:2, 3:18—where the two titles occur, he will find that it is always “Lord and Saviour,” and *not* “Saviour and Lord.” Therefore, those who have not bowed to Christ’s sceptre and enthroned Him in their hearts and lives, and yet imagine that they are trusting in Him as their Saviour, *are deceived*, and unless God disillusion them they will go down to the everlasting burnings with a lie in their right hand (Isa. 44:20). Christ is “the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey Him*” (Heb. 5:9), but the attitude of those who submit not to His Lordship is “*we will not have this Man to reign over us*” (Luke 19:14). Pause then, my reader, and honestly face the question: are you subject to His will, are you sincerely endeavouring to keep His commandments?

Alas, alas, God’s “way of salvation” is almost entirely unknown today. The *nature* of Christ’s salvation is almost universally misunderstood, and the *terms* of His salvation misrepresented on every hand. The “Gospel” which is now being proclaimed is, in nine cases out of every ten, but a *perversion* of the Truth, and tens of thousands, assured they are bound for Heaven, are now hastening to Hell, as fast as time can take them. Things are far, *far worse* in Christendom than even the “pessimist” and the “alarmist” suppose. We are not a prophet, nor shall we indulge in any speculation of what Biblical prophecy forecasts—wiser men than the writer have often made fools of themselves by so doing. We are frank to say that we know not what God is about to do. Religious conditions were much worse, even in England, one hundred and fifty years ago. But this we greatly fear; unless God is pleased to grant a real revival, it will not be long ere “the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people” (Isa. 60:2), for the light of the true Gospel is rapidly disappearing. Modern “Evangelism” constitutes, in our judgment, the most solemn of all the “signs of the times.”

What must the people of God do in view of the existing situation? Ephesians 5:11 supplies the Divine answer: “*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,*” and everything *opposed to the light of the Word is “darkness.”*



It is the bounden duty of every Christian to have no dealings with the “evangelistic” monstrosity of the day; to *withhold* all moral and financial support of the same, to attend none of their meetings, to circulate none of their tracts. Those preachers who tell sinners they may be saved *without* forsaking their idols, *without* repenting, *without* surrendering to the Lordship of Christ, are as erroneous and dangerous as others who insist that salvation is by works and that Heaven must be earned by our own efforts.—A.W.P.

## The Doctrine of Sanctification.

### *Conclusion.*

The doctrine of sanctification is of such vast importance, occupies so large a place in the Word of God, and is so many-sided in its scope, that we deemed it well to write thereon at length, especially as it is so little understood today. And now, after thirty-three articles, we are wondering whether we have defeated our own objective. It seemed necessary to approach the subject from various angles, to distinguish between its several parts, and to consider separately its different aspects. Having done so, perhaps we can help the reader most in this conclusion by briefly reviewing the ground we have covered, summarizing the explanations and expositions given, and endeavouring to further clarify one or two points which may not yet be quite clear to the interested reader after which we would strongly advise those who desire to get a clear grasp of this blessed truth to *re-read* the entire series—setting aside all other reading while he does so.

Sanctification is an act of the Father, then of the Son, and then of the Holy Spirit, whereby God's people are *set apart* for His delight and glory. It is a *cleansing* of their persons so that they may be fitted for God's use; whilst it is also the *adorning* and making meet of those who are going to dwell with God forever. He not only accounts the believer holy in Christ, but He makes him so in himself, by communicating to him a principle of holiness and by the Holy Spirit's making his body His temple. The sanctification of the believer must be considered under its three tenses: he has already been sanctified, he is now being sanctified, and he will yet be fully sanctified in the future.

The sanctification of the believer is a moral quality imparted to him at regeneration, which is the same in its nature as that which belongs to the Divine character. It is the image of God—lost by the first Adam, restored by the last Adam—stamped upon the heart, consisting of righteousness and holiness. It is the very antithesis of sin: as much so as light and darkness, death and life, God and the Devil. As all sin is a transgression of the Law, true sanctification brings its possessor into conformity to the Law. Sanctification is, therefore, an integral and essential part of *salvation*, being a deliverance from the pollution and power of sin, causing its recipient to love what he once hated, and to now hate what he formerly loved.

In order to get a clear grasp of the whole subject, it is very necessary to distinguish sharply between its two principal aspects: the *positional* and *practical* holiness of the believer, that is, the *status and state* which the meritorious work of Christ has given him before God, and the *response* which this calls for from him. This vitally important distinction will be best observed by us as we view the subject under its two chief aspects: the Divine inworking of holiness and the human outworking thereof. This outworking, or performance of practical holiness issues from the principle of grace received at the new birth, and proceeds along the lines of mortification and vivification or denying unto sin and living unto God.

There are two great dangers against which we must be continually on our guard: that of dwelling so much upon the believer's perfect sanctification in Christ that he has little or no concern about the cultivation of practical holiness, and that of being so occupied with the practical holiness and our failure to measure up to God's standard of the same that we lose sight of and cease to live in the joy and power of that holiness which we have in our Covenant Head. Some are more prone to the one, some to the other. It is most essential that we preserve a balance between the objective and subjective sides of the

Truth, yet this is far from being an easy attainment. On the one hand, the renewed soul can only enjoy real peace by looking away from self with all its failures unto the One who has met every requirement of God for us. On the other hand, the heart can only be kept right before God as we make conscience of all known sins, judge ourselves unsparingly for them, and penitently confess the same.

Each part of our sanctification is inseparably connected with the other. The elect were first sanctified by God the Father before the foundation of the world, when by an act of His will they were blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ and much graced in the Beloved. Second, they were sanctified by the incarnate Son of God, who, by His infinitely meritorious work has set the elect before God in all His worthiness and Surety perfections. A perfect holiness is as indispensable as a perfect righteousness in order to have access to and communion with the thrice holy God, and in Christ we have the one as truly as we have the other, for by His one offering He has perfected us forever. Yet is it absolutely necessary to mix faith therewith if we are to live in the power and enjoyment of the same, and that is not possible until we are, third, sanctified by the Spirit.

It is only by means of the Spirit's sanctifying us that we obtain personal proof that we are among the favoured number of those sanctified by the offering of Christ, for it is by His operations alone that we are capacitated to enter into the good secured for us by the Redeemer. But it is *this* aspect of our subject which presents the acutest problem to the conscience of the believer, who, conscious of such an ocean of corruption still raging within, finds it so difficult to be assured that a supernatural work of grace has been wrought in his heart. It is therefore of great importance that we should be quite clear upon this branch of our theme, and ascertain what the sanctification of the Spirit consists of, and what is not included therein—i.e., it does not involve the eradication of the carnal nature in this life.

*Positionally*, our sanctification by the Spirit results from our being vitally united to Christ, for the moment we are livingly joined to Him His holiness becomes ours, and our standing before God is the same as His. *Relatively*, our sanctification of the Spirit issues from our being renewed by Him, for the moment He quickens us we are set apart from those who are dead in sins. *Personally*, we are consecrated unto God by the Spirit's indwelling of us, making our bodies His temples. *Experimentally*, our sanctification by the Spirit consists in the impartation to us of a principle or "nature" of holiness whereby we become conformed to the Divine Law. Thus, our sanctification by the Spirit is the outcome of that supernatural operation whereby we are "created in Christ Jesus," which radically distinguishes us from the ungodly, and capacitates us to walk in faith and obedience.

In carrying on His work of grace in the believer, God does not set aside his accountability and deal with him as a mechanical automaton; no, He enforces the believer's responsibility by enlisting his cooperation and by blessing his use of the appointed means. The Christian life is a vigorous warfare, and holiness is only prompted in his heart and life by his watchfulness and alertness, striving and contending against his spiritual foes. The life of faith and the race of holiness cannot be maintained except by diligent attention, earnest effort and perseverance. Carelessness and slothfulness are dangerous, and if persisted in are fatal. Mortification and vivification are absolutely necessary.

Sanctification, then, is a *blessing* which the elect have received from God the Father, a blessing which includes their being eternally set apart or consecrated for His pleasure, the

cleansing of them from all that would unfit, and the adorning of them with all that is necessary to make them meet for His use. It is *a gift* which they have in and through Christ: a perfect, inalienable, and eternal gift. It is *a moral quality*, communicated by the Holy Spirit, an holy principle or new nature. It is also *a duty* which God requires from us. To insist that the pursuit and practice of holiness is our obligation, in nowise clashes with God's free grace, for while it is true that we can perform no part of our duty except by Divine grace, it is equally true that God's grace is given to us for no other reason than that we may rightly perform our duty. Divine grace and our obedience *are* opposed in justification (Rom. 11:6), but *not* so in our sanctification (Phil. 2:12, 13).

If there be one verse in the New Testament which comes nearer to furnishing us with a complete outline of the essential features of our subject, perhaps it is, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). This is an exhortation unto the practice and performance of holiness. Four things in it are to be duly noted. First, the *basis* of the appeal, namely, the fact that God has made precious promises unto the believer—the particular reference being to those given in the closing verses of chapter 6. Second, the *task* set before us, namely, to cleanse ourselves from all that defiles, outwardly and inwardly. Third, the aim or *design* of this, namely, the effecting of holiness. Fourth, the *dynamic* for the same, namely, the fear of God. Let us enlarge a little upon these points.

The duty here enjoined is that we "cleanse ourselves," and this not in order to win God's regard for us, but because we are already His "dearly beloved." It is the response which we ought to make unto the wondrous grace which has been shown unto and bestowed upon us. The emphasis is thrown upon the Christian's responsibility and the discharge thereof. A prayerful pondering and an earnest effort to obey this call is very necessary if we are to be preserved from that deforming lopsidedness which is so prevalent in Christendom today. "Let us *cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" is *as much a part of Holy Writ* as is "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"; yet for every time 2 Corinthians 7:1 is quoted, probably 1 John 1:7 is cited a hundred times. That ought not to be!

Sin is polluting and defiling and is no more to be tolerated by the saint than is physical filth: if we are careful to keep our bodies clean, much more diligent should we be in seeing to it that the soul be kept pure. Just so far as we entertain the idea that sinning is unavoidable, that it is an inevitable part of our daily lot, will we lose sight of its heinousness, cease judging ourselves, and become the prey and sport of the Evil One. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34) is the standard which God has set before us, and at which we must constantly aim. We are duty bound to cleanse ourselves from all that defiles us, both inwardly and outwardly, and to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Let it be remembered that holiness *of heart* is the chief part of our conforming to the spiritual Law of God, for no outward work is considered by Him as holy unless the heart be right before Him, for it is the heart which He sees and tries. Inward purity—that is, the disallowing, resisting, striving against the motions of sin within us—is absolutely necessary for maintaining external purity of practice, integrity, and righteousness. "Out of the heart are the issues of life": what most prevails *there* is what comes froth into more or less open manifestation. When sin in general, or any lust in particular, is entertained in

the heart, it will be likely, some time or other, to force an eruption. Hence the tremendous importance of "keep thy heart with all diligence" (Prov. 4:23). Cleanse yourself from pride, unbelief, impatience, covetousness, an unforgiving spirit, levity, hypocrisy, everything contrary to true piety.

"Perfecting holiness in the fear of God" is to be the believer's aim and design: to walk worthy of his high calling, to act consistently with his standing and state in Christ. Having been made a saint by the sovereign and effectual call of God, saintly conduct is to be his constant endeavour. Sanctified condition is both the starting point and motive of practical holiness. "Perfecting holiness" *does not mean* that the holiness which the believer now has before God is defective and incomplete and needs to be augmented by his own efforts. No indeed. He has already been "perfected forever" by the one offering of Christ (Heb. 10:14). The meaning of this word "perfecting" is that we are to *carry out to its proper issue* the Gospel which is ours in Christ, and this we are to do by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. But as this term is much misunderstood in other passages, we will add a few remarks upon it.

"But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God *perfected*" (1 John 2:5). This expression "the love of God" is made sufficiently definite and emphatic in this Epistle to forbid any thought that it could possibly refer to *our* love to Him: it is the contemplation of the wondrous love of God which furnishes the most influential motive to move us to the performance of practical holiness. But it may be asked, How can it be said that the love of God is "perfected"? Was it ever imperfect? And if it were, how could it be perfected by a believer's keeping His Word? The answer is that by our obeying His commands *the design* of God's love in us is reached. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). The same explanation holds good of this statement: the love of God toward us reaches its proper result and its end is accomplished in us when Christians love one another.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment" (1 John 4:17, 18). The R.V. more correctly renders this "Herein is love (namely, *the love*" spoken of in the preceding verse) made perfect with us, etc." i.e., *has attained its end*. Verses 9 and 10 show clearly the object which the love of God had in view concerning us, and now this design is accomplished, for "because as He (Christ) is, so are we in this world"—we are before God in all the perfection and acceptableness of His son's propitiation, viewed not as sinners, but as made the righteousness of God in Him. If, then, we really know and believe the love God hath to us, and see what wonders it has accomplished, the result must be "that we may have boldness in the day of judgment."

The fact is that in John's Epistle "the love of God" always expresses *His love* to us, and never ours to Him. Nothing but a spirit of delusion could cause an man to boast that his love for God was "perfect"—without defect in nature, manner, or degree. But the one verse which settles once for all the meaning of this term "made perfect" is, "And by works was (Abraham's) faith made perfect" (James 2:22), for obviously this declaration cannot mean that the patriarch's faith itself was thereby perfected, but rather that in his acts of obedience faith *reached its designed end* and achieved its proper result. So, in like manner, by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit we are "perfecting holiness," that is, God's design in sanctifying us in Christ is now *realized*.

A word upon the *dynamic* for this task. The design of our holiness in Christ namely the cleansing of ourselves from all filthiness, is to be realized "in the fear of God." That does not signify a servile horror of incurring His wrath, but a filial awe of His majesty and a dread of grieving Him. Alas, this is something which has well-nigh disappeared from modern religion. Fifty years ago it was a common thing to designate a believer "a God-fearing man," but today, were one so described, the majority of professing Christians would shun him as a melancholy Puritan. The love of God has been so disproportionately emphasised and His awe-inspiring sovereignty and holiness so ignored, that instead of His being an Object to be feared, people prate about God as though they were His equals; and consequently, as the principal dynamic for it be lost, practical holiness or personal piety is now at such a low ebb everywhere.

Of the wicked it is written "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18): they are not afraid of trifling with Him and treading His commands beneath their feet. But with the saints it is otherwise, for "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10) and they have been "made wise unto salvation." "By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6): it was so with Joseph, for when tempted to evil, he declared "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9) O to live day by day in the realization "Thou God seest me," for how else shall we "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling"? Then beg God, my reader, to place His holy fear within you, and to make your heart stand in awe of His majesty.

Our task is completed. Those who followed us carefully through this series of articles will have perceived that the writer felt he was sailing through deep waters, and at times much caution was needed so as to avoid being wrecked on dangerous rocks. Yet we have not, consciously, avoided any difficulty, but sought to grapple fairly with each one that was presented. How far we succeeded, the reader must decide. We have sought diligently to enforce the standard of holiness God sets before us, while we have studiously maintained that none fully measures up to it in this life; yet such failure rests wholly *on us* and is highly culpable. The fullness there is in Christ (John 1:16) is available for us to draw upon; the grace of God is sufficient for every need. We do not, we dare not justify the Christian for walking, in any measure, after the flesh.

No sin is to be allowed by us. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, (and not other people!) and the truth is not in us" is among the "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (1 John 1:8, 2:1). We entreat those who are panting after the perfected likeness of God's Son, not to be deceived as to their present condition and attainments; and on the other hand, not to be discouraged because of their difficulties and defeats. The narrow way of holiness is not an easy down-slope, winding through flowery fields. It lies through an Enemy's country, and though faith may always rejoice that far more is He that is for us than all who can be against us, yet the believer cannot say in the presence of the Enemy, as His Lord could, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30).

We are called to ceaseless vigilance, yet faith's fight is one in which the issue is not doubtful. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4), yet this necessarily implies that the victory will be changed unto defeat if the eye be turned from the Object of faith to regale itself on the proofs of victory won. Believers are to shine as lights in the world, but they only shine by *reflected* light, so that to do so they must be ever turned toward the Sun of righteousness, occupied not with their shining, but

with its Source. Nothing is further from practical holiness than to *boast* of it, for the closer one walks with Christ, the more conscious will he be of his own unchristlikeness, and hang his head in shame. Keep short accounts with God; seek to hide His Word in your heart that you may be kept from sinning; let your chief petition be for enabling grace; look forward to that Day when your sanctification will be consummated by glorification, when you will be done with sin forever.—A.W.P.

### Our Annual Letter.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye *strive together* with me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. 15:30). Though so great an Apostle, yet Paul felt the need of and affectionately sought the earnest prayers of his fellow-Christians. No servant of Christ should feel ashamed, then, in soliciting the supplications of God's people. If one so eminent, so richly endowed, so extensively used as the chief of Christ's ambassadors longed for the intercessory cooperation of his Christian friends, how much more do we require *our* hands to be upheld. We are satisfied it is only in answer to the prayers of many readers that God has permitted this magazine to continue till now, and we are equally satisfied that it will cease once this stream of prayer dries up.

It is to be noted that Paul grounded this appeal for prayer on a three-fold basis. First, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake." This was as though the Apostle had said, He is my Master, and I am engaged in His work. It is not my own aggrandizement, but the glory of His name, that I desire and strive for: if, then, you are concerned about the prosperity of His cause on earth, pray for me. Second, "and for the love of the Spirit." This was as though he said, If you have experienced His love for you, and would be returning your love to Him, then be not remiss in this office of kindness. Let cooperation in earnest and fervent prayer be the fruit of that communion which we have one with another by the blessed Spirit. Third, "that I may be delivered from them that do not believe" etc. (vv. 31, 32): that I may be preserved from all foes, and permitted to finish my course with joy.

The disparity is indeed great between the honoured Apostle to the Gentiles and the unworthy editor of this magazine, yet in exact ratio to that disparity is our own *need for help*—for wisdom, for grace, for meekness, for steadfastness, for perseverance. And we would lovingly press upon our Christian friends the same motives which were employed by Paul himself. Strive in prayer for us "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake." It is solely for the sake of those who are members of His mystical body, and not for any self-ends, we continue publishing, for we do not take or receive a penny for our own labours. For the sake of those who are near and dear to Christ, to whom He condescends to make our articles a blessing, pray that this ministry may be *further maintained by Him*. "And for the love of the Spirit": though in the Providence of God, the editor and his wife and many of our readers are widely separated, yet in the love of the Spirit we too may meet at the Throne of Grace. We, too, have many enemies, who would be glad to see these "Studies" cease: pray, then, that God will graciously thwart their efforts to bring this to pass.

The two things (from the human side) which we should most aim at and strive after in our praying are *sincerity and simplicity*. God cannot be imposed upon: He reads the heart, and anything savouring of hypocrisy is abhorrent in His sight. Formality is at variance with the very spirit of prayer: reality is what God requires. As for simplicity, the more unpretentious and artless our language be, the better. It is a trite statement to make, yet perhaps it needs pointing out, that father and children do not make speeches one to another; and God is the believer's *Father*; then let us approach with all the naturalness and spontaneity of His little ones. Neither much speaking nor fine phrasing are required. Prayer is unburdening the heart, breathing forth its spiritual desires, petitioning One who delights to be enquired of, and who is ready and able to supply our every need.

But though simplicity should characterize our asking, *fervency* is to evidence our reality: "*strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.*" The word which is there



employed signifies the strongest exertion, alluding to the struggles of wrestlers in the public games. It is far more than a perfunctory performance, namely, an ardent and fervent exercise of the soul. To “strive” in prayer is to stir up our graces, to cry unto God with all our heart, to be persistent and importunate. As a watch needs frequent winding, so we need to constantly “stir up ourselves” to really “lay hold of” God (Isa. 64:7). To “strive” in prayer is to wrestle against unbelief, coldness of heart, impatience, everything which is contrary to the putting forth of holy desires. The Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 8:26) is a striking example of earnest contending in prayer.

If we are to *prevail* in prayer, we must “strive” in the same; we must put forth all that is within us, and pray with faith, fixedness, and fervour. Scripture often emphasises this note: Hannah “*poured out* her soul before the LORD” (1 Sam. 1:15); “the effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). But we will not say anything further on prayer for the moment, for now that we have completed the series upon the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, if we are spared, the cover-page articles during 1938 will be devoted to this theme. But let it be pointed out that the genuineness of prayer is evidenced by the earnestness of our efforts to *act* in accordance with our petitions. If I am praying for more faith and am not diligent in resisting the workings of unbelief, or if I pray to be increasingly delivered from sin and yet am careless about running into the place of temptation, then I am not sincere.

So too, if I am really striving in prayer for God to bless this magazine and cause its publication to be continued, then I shall do everything in my power *to make it known to others*. That may involve a little trouble. For instance, you have a friend residing at some distance, and there is reason to believe that he or she would welcome this monthly messenger: then why not write them a letter, saying how much help you have, under God, received from its articles, urge them to read a sample copy you will loan or send them, and ask them to apply to us for it to be sent regularly to them? How are we to get into touch with hungry souls, if our readers do not “strive together” with us? Alas, how very few of those who write to say what a blessing Studies has been to them, make real efforts to secure new readers.

We sometimes wonder how old friends will feel if in the Providence of God this magazine ceased to be published. It *would* have been so long ago, had it depended upon the cooperation of three fourths of our readers. It is only because *a few* of them have gotten others interested, and also because quite a number permit us to send them two or three copies of each issue, that we have gone on till now; and we earnestly hope that *none* of them will request us to henceforth send them only one. Old readers are being called Home, and new ones are not taking their place. Yet there *are* still hungry souls, here and there, who would be thankful for this magazine did they but know of it; will not *you* bring us into touch with some of them? If you desire to really rejoice our hearts, accompany your gift with the names of one or two Christian friends for us to send the Studies to (D.V.) during 1938.

Once more it is our joy to record the goodness and faithfulness of Him we serve, in that we close another year with every bill promptly paid and a nice credit balance to carry forward. Let not the annual report of this good news cause any to take it as a mere matter of course, but rather let us all seek to praise God with deeper fervour. The “Welcome Tidings” in the July issue will have indicated that we have again been the recipients of many appreciative words: how kind is the Lord in granting us such encouragements along

the way. And once more we are happy to say that neither the editor nor his wife has had a day's sickness during the past twelve months—how undeserving we are of such mercies! O that our health and strength may count more for His glory, for the night will soon come when we can no longer work. We have not opened our mouth in public a single time during 1937: this is a great grief, but we seek grace to bow to God's sovereign will.

We wish to heartily thank our many dear friends for their loving and loyal support, not only by their monetary gifts, but their letters of encouragement and prayers. Only the Day to come will reveal to what extent the editor and his wife were upheld by the supplications of the saints. Many times during the past year has he been conscious of the help which came from the intercession of others: often when experiencing a difficulty while composing an article, light has been granted, and he has said to his faithful helpmate, "The Lord has responded to the cry of someone on our behalf." We trust that what has been said above will move many others to pray more definitely and diligently for this written ministry, that it may be graciously sustained by the Lord, and made increasingly fruitful to His eternal praise.

Might we also suggest that readers pray for God to grant *them* an open heart and receptive spirit? A prejudiced mind is an insuperable hindrance to our reception of the Truth. We know from experience how hard it is to break away from early ideas, while we are not unmindful of the danger of grasping at (without thoroughly weighing) what is novel. Our own views upon Prophecy have been considerably modified during the last few years. We are now satisfied that there has been a great deal of carnal speculation upon future events. Pride, curiosity, love of the sensational, and fondness of the limelight are native products of the flesh; but it requires Divine grace to make us sober, humble, and frank to say "I do not know." The very fact there was so much in fulfilled prophecy that was not rightly understood until *after* it was accomplished should check us from wild theorizings and dogmatic assertions in connections with unfulfilled prophecy.

Scripture affirms "The coming of the Lord *draweth* nigh" (James 5:8), i.e., is ever getting nearer; and with *that* we should be content—no one is justified in saying "The coming of the Lord *is* near." Friends kindly note that we are not prepared to enter into any correspondence on the subject. If you think we err at this point, *pray for us*; as it is possible you may be wrong, pray for *yourself*. O that both writer and reader will cry from the heart, "that which I see not teach Thou me" (Job 34:32): may the Lord graciously teach us experimentally and effectually, so that our lives may redound to His glory. With loving greetings and all good wishes, we remain, yours by God's abounding mercy, A.W. and V.E. Pink.