

**Volume 19—Studies in the Scriptures—Number 12****DECEMBER, 1940****THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.**

“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). We sincerely trust our readers do not feel that we are running out our meditations on this verse to a wearisome length. Its contents are so full, so marvellous, so blessed, that they might well engage our attention profitably for several more papers thereon. Especially so in view of the fact that there is so very little real doctrinal preaching in this day of superficiality. And even where the people of God have been instructed in the fundamentals of the Gospel, it cannot but refresh and rejoice their hearts to be reminded anew of that which is the wonderment of angels. On this occasion we propose to dwell upon the most important expression in our text.

What is connoted by “the righteousness of God” which we are here said to be made or “become” in Christ? To this a threefold answer may be returned. First, it is a righteousness *provided by God*, for those who have none of their own. Having lost our original righteousness (when Adam sinned) and thereby fallen under condemnation, God, out of the fullness of His grace, provided a righteousness which met every requirement of His Law and secured our salvation, and which upon our believing is placed to our account—in consequence of which we are acquitted from all guilt and given title to the reward of eternal life. This righteousness is one which differs from all other righteousness that ever was or can be performed. It differs entirely from the righteousness of men and angels, for it is the righteousness not of creatures, but of the Creator: “I the LORD have created it” (Isa. 45:8). It is therefore a Divine and infinitely excellent one.

Second, it is a righteousness *effected by God*. The Father created it through the Son, in the same way as by the Son He created the universe (Col. 1:16), and this because the Son is one with Himself; and therefore do we read of “the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). Of old God declared, “I bring near My righteousness, it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry” (Isa. 46:13). It was during His life on earth that this righteousness was wrought out by the incarnate Son. It consisted of that perfect obedience to the Law, both to its precepts and to its penalty, which was yielded to it by our Lord Jesus, who is “the mighty God.” This is the “everlasting righteousness” which has been “brought in” (Dan. 9:24) by Him. The obedience of Immanuel confers more honour upon the Law than the obedience of all intelligent creatures (Isa. 42:21). It was a vicarious obedience which the incarnate Son rendered to the Law, and therefore is He “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6).

Thus it is the righteousness of God not only because it was planned by Him, but also because it was actually performed by the God-man Mediator. At the very moment when He publicly dedicated Himself unto that work for which He came here, He declared, “Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). Though this flawless conformity to the Law was accomplished by the Son of Man, yet He disclaimed all separate praise for the same: “the Father which dwelleth in Me, *He* doeth the works” (John 14:10). That blessed avowal not only expressed the perfections of His human nature as the *obedient* Glorifier of His Maker and Father, but also intimates that all which *He did* was the work also of *God*, for that Man had been taken into personal union with God, and therefore did He affirm, “I and Father are one” (John 10:30).

Third, it is a righteousness *accepted by God*. God is satisfied with the obedience which Christ performed in the place of His people, and signified His approval thereof by bringing from the dead our Surety and seating Him at His own right hand in the heavens. He has received that righteousness as a perfect ransom for us, for it is the price Christ paid to deliver His people from going down to the pit of everlasting destruction, and by which He obtained for them heavenly and eternal glory. And this perfect obedience of Christ is reckoned to the account of all who are joined to Him by *faith*: it is legally transferred to them by Divine imputation; as it is written: “even the righteousness of God . . . upon all them that *believe*” (Rom. 3:22). Faith is no part of that righteousness, but it is through faith it is received and becomes available for salvation. Faith is the belief of the Divine testimony concerning that righteousness and trust in Him who is the Author of it. Faith perceives and acknowledges the suitability and excellence of Christ’s righteousness and cordially embraces it.

“That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” But before we can have a right to anything in Christ, we must be one with Him, we must be joined to Him as our Head, being dead to the Law and married to Him. That union is accomplished through faith, and therefore His righteousness, which becomes ours in this way, is called “the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13) and “the righteousness which is of God through faith” (Phil. 3:9). It is called the righteousness of “faith” because faith is the only instrument which God is pleased to make use of in applying His righteousness. These grand truths are presented *to faith*, for it is the very nature of faith to seek from its glorious Object what it has not in itself. The doctrine of vicarious imputation is something which is entirely foreign to human experience, originating with Him whose thoughts are not as our thoughts and whose ways are as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth.

This righteousness is “upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22). It is not put into them as their sanctification is wrought in the soul by the Spirit, but is placed upon them as a robe: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10). It is the spotless garment which is given by the Lord Jesus to those who hear His voice, that they may be clothed and that the shame of their (soul’s) nakedness may not appear (Rev. 3:17). It is the “fine linen,” clean and white, with which the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, is arrayed, for the fine linen is “the righteousness of saints” (Rev. 19:8). Thus Jesus Christ is of God made unto His people “righteousness” (1 Cor. 1:30)—His righteousness becomes theirs. As our sins were laid upon Him, so His obedience is put upon us. It is not a righteousness wrought *by us*, but *given to and put upon us*.

Here, then, is the great glad tidings, the glorious Gospel: that we are made righteousness in Christ. Carnal wisdom cannot apprehend it, but faith closes with and rejoices in it. However contrary it may be to human reason that guilt should be transferred from the unjust to the Just, and that the surety righteousness of Christ should be imputed to worthless sinners, yet faith submissively accepts the truth and thereby do we learn to know the love of Him with whom we have to do. “To the righteousness of Christ is the eye of the believer forever to be directed. On that righteousness must he rest, on that righteousness must he live, on that righteousness must he die, in that righteousness must he appear before the judgment-seat, in that righteousness must he stand forever in the presence of a righteous God” (Robert Haldane). Well then may we exclaim with the Psalmist, “My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness, Thy salvation all the day . . . I will go in the

strength of the LORD God, I will make mention of Thy righteousness, of *Thine only*” (71:15, 16).—A.W.P.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

### 16. *Covetousness Corrected*: Matthew 6:19, 20.

We are now to enter the fifth division of our Lord's sermon, and as we do so it is well to remind ourselves afresh of His first and primary design in this important address, namely, to correct and refute the erroneous views of His hearers. The Jews held false beliefs concerning the Person of the Messiah, the character of His mission, and the nature of the kingdom He would establish. As unregenerate men their views were carnal and mundane, self-centered and confined to things temporal. It requires little perspicuity to perceive that all through this sermon the Lord Jesus makes direct reference unto the false notions which were generally entertained by the Jews respecting His kingdom, to which they constantly opposed the holy claims of God, the righteous requirements of His Law, and the imperative necessity of the new birth for all who were to be His subjects and disciples.

What has just been pointed out explains why our Lord began His sermon with the beatitudes, in which He described the characters and defined the graces of those who enter His kingdom. The Jews looked for great material enrichment, festivity and feasting, and supposed that those who would occupy the principal positions of honour under the Messiah's reign would be they who were fierce and successful warriors, and who though ceremonially holy would avenge on the Gentiles all the wrongs they had inflicted on Israel, and that henceforth they would be free from all opposition and oppression. But Christ declared blessed are those who were poor in spirit, who mourned, who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, who were merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers, and who were persecuted for righteousness' sake. A greater contrast could not be imagined.

So in His second division Christ announced that the officers of His kingdom would not be the destroyers of men's bodies but the preservers of their souls—the "salt of the earth"; not the suppressers of the Gentiles but "the light of the world." In like manner, in His third division Christ declared that so far from it being His mission to overthrow the ancient order and introduce radical changes, He came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it. Thus, too, with what is now to be before us: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasure in Heaven." The Jews expected in their Messiah a temporal prince, and the happiness they anticipated under His sceptre was merely a high degree of worldly prosperity, to enjoy an abundance of riches, honours and pleasures. But our Lord here exposes their error, and declares that the happiness He imparts is not carnal but spiritual, and that it will be found in its perfection not on earth (Palestine) but in Heaven.

Now it should be pointed out that the false notions generally entertained by the Jews respecting the Messiah's kingdom originated in principles which are common to unregenerate human nature, though taking a peculiar form and colour from their special circumstances. Hence it is that the teachings of Christ in this sermon are pertinent to all men in every age. Human nature is the same everywhere. The citizens of this world have ever devoted the greater part of their time and energy in procuring and accumulating something which they may call their own, and in setting their hearts steadfastly upon the same rather than upon God. So general is this practice that, providing they are not unduly unscrupulous and do not injure their fellows in their greedy quest, such a policy evokes approval rather than reproach: "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself" (Psa.

49:18). Those who succeed in business are called shrewd and efficient, and those who amass great wealth, “the captains of industry,” “financial wizards,” etc.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth” (Matt. 6:19). The *order* of Truth followed by Christ in Matthew 6 is very striking and blessed, and needs to be carefully heeded by us. In the first 18 verses we are conducted into the Sanctuary, instructed to have our hearts occupied with Him who sees in secret; in verse 19 and onwards we come out to face the temptations and trials of the world. It is parallel with what we find in Leviticus and Numbers: in the former, Israel is engaged almost entirely with the services and privileges of the tabernacle; in the latter, we have a description of their walk and warfare in the Wilderness. It is of vital importance we attend to this order, for it is only as we duly maintain communion with God in the secret place that we are equipped and enabled for the trials of the way as we journey toward the Heavenly Canaan. Unless our hearts be firmly set upon the Promised Land, they will turn back to Egypt and lust after its flesh-pots.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.” From here to the end of the chapter Christ’s design is to divert the hearts of His hearers from a spirit of covetousness, first delivering the prohibition and then amplifying and enforcing the same by a variety of cogent reasons. The word for “lay up” is more expressive and emphatic in the original than is expressed here in the English: signifying first to gather together, and second, to hoard or heap up against the future—as in Romans 2:5, “heapeth up” or “treasureth up unto thyself.” “Treasure” means wealth in abundance, costly things such as property, lands, gold and precious stones. The words “upon earth” here refer not so much to place as to the *kind* of treasures, for heavenly treasure may be laid up while we are here on earth, and therefore it is the hoarding of earthly and material treasures which is in view.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.” There have been some fanatics who interpreted this command literally, insisting that it is to be taken without limitation, as a prohibition against accumulating money or adding to our earthly possessions. To be consistent they should not stop there but go on to “sell that thou hast and give to the poor” (Matt. 19:21), for this is no less expressly required than the former. But such a course would mean the overturning of all distinctions between rich and poor, *any* possession of property, which is clearly contrary to the whole trend of Scripture. Let us, then, briefly point out what Christ did *not* here forbid. First, diligent labour in a man’s vocation, whereby he provides things needful for himself and those dependent upon him: “not slothful in business” (Rom. 12:11), is one of the precepts of the Gospel.

Nor does Christ here forbid the fruit of our labours in the possession of goods and riches, provided they be acquired honestly and used aright. Let us not forget that Scripture, “But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:18). The Lord graciously prospered Abraham, Job and David, and so far from their possession of wealth being a mark of His disfavour, it was the very opposite. Third, nor does Christ here forbid the laying up in store for our own future use or for our family. Is not the sluggard admonished to take a leaf out of the book of the ants, who gather together their winter’s food in the summertime (Prov. 6:6-8)? And has not the Apostle declared that, “the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children” (2 Cor. 12:14). And Again—“if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).

What, then, is it which Christ here forbids? We answer, various forms of covetousness. First, the excessive seeking after worldly wealth, wherein men keep neither moderation nor measure: although God gives them more than needed to supply their needs, yet they are not content, their desire being insatiable. That it is not sinful for a man to seek after the necessities of life—either for his present or future use—we have shown above. As to what constitutes necessity varies considerably in different cases, according to the station which Providence has allotted in this world: a workman requires tools, a business man must have capital, the master of a large estate needs sufficient revenues to pay his servants. No precise rule can be laid down, but the judgment and example of the godly who use the creature aright, and not the practice of the covetous, must guide us.

Second, Christ here condemns those who seek principally after worldly goods and disparage and disregard the true riches. This is clear from the opposition made in the next verse, where, “lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven,” is placed over against, “lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth.” Thus it was in the case of Esau who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage (Heb. 12:16). Thus it was with the Gadarenes, who upon the loss of their herds of swine, besought Christ that He would depart out of their coasts (Luke 8:37). Thus it has been throughout the ages, and so it still is, that the great majority of men spend their strength in labouring after that which “satisfieth not” (Isa. 55:2), seeking after almost anything or everything rather than after that which does not perish. That is why there is so much preaching and so little profiting: the hearers’ thoughts and desires are taken up with other things.

Third, Christ here condemns those who put their trust and confidence in worldly things that they have treasured up, which is idolatry of the heart. Whatever a man sets his heart upon and looks to for support, it is his god, and therefore his covetousness, is called “idolatry” (Col. 3:5). If we have stored up a supply against future need, and this takes us from dependence upon God for our daily sustenance, then we are guilty of this sin. It is for this reason that Christ makes it so hard for a rich man to enter Heaven (Matt. 19:23, 24), because he *trusts* in his riches, and if we are close observers we shall usually find that rich men are proud-hearted and secure, neither heeding God’s judgments nor attending to the means of salvation. David’s counsel must therefore be followed, “If riches increase (not give them away, but) set not thine heart upon them” (Psa. 62:10).

The fourth practice here forbidden is the selfish laying up of treasures, for ourselves only, without regard to using the same for the good of our generation, the support of the Gospel, or the praise of God. This is indeed a devilish practice, for everyone of us is but a steward, to dispense our portion to the glory of God and the good of his fellows. The poor are God’s poor, the creatures of His hands, and therefore He requires that each steward should be found faithful in seeing to it that each of them has his portion. God will yet call the rich to an accounting, therefore let each of us live in the light of that Day of reckoning. Let us seek grace to be preserved from hoarding up riches for our own selfish use, from putting our trust in them, and from making them our chief delight.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.” Here our Lord gives a threefold reason for the enforcing of His precept, or illustrates the corruption and uncertainty of worldly possessions by three examples: showing they are liable to destruction by such creatures as moths, by the inherent decay which pertains to all earthly things, and from the fact they may be taken from us by fraud or violence. Have we procured an elaborate wardrobe? in secret and silence the moth may be eating it up. Have we invested in

secret and silence the moth may be eating it up. Have we invested in property? the ravages of time will soon wear it away. Is it gold and platinum, diamonds and pearls we have hoarded up? The hand of the marauder may soon seize them. Heaven is the only safe place in which to deposit our riches.

As we have pointed out in an earlier paragraph, the vast majority of our fellows make it their supreme aim in life to acquire as much as possible of worldly wealth. With such an example on every side, and the trend of their own hearts in the same direction, the disciples of Christ are in greater danger from this sin than from most others. To nullify this evil tendency Christ here emphasizes the relative valuelessness of mundane things. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle" (Prov. 23:5). What true satisfaction can there be in the possession of things which are subject to decay and loss by violence? One of the strongest proofs of human depravity and of the diseased state of our minds is the extreme difficulty which most of us experience in the realizing of this fact in such a way that it really influences our actions.

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven" (Matt. 6:20). Having shown what we must *not* do in respect of treasures here on earth, and knowing his inclination to be such that man will needs have something for his treasure, Christ here makes known what treasure we may lay up for ourselves. But how shall we lay up treasure in Heaven? for we cannot of ourselves go there. No man can save himself: the beginning, progress and end of our salvation is wholly of God. Answer: as often in Scripture the work of the efficient cause is here ascribed to the instrument (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Tim. 4:16). To make us rich with heavenly treasure is the work of God alone, yet because we are instrumental by His grace in the use of means to get this treasure, this command is given to us as though the work is solely ours, though God be alone the Author of it.

It is of most importance that we form a true estimate of what is necessary for true happiness—where it is to be found and how it is to be obtained—for the tenor of our thoughts, the direction of our affections, and the pursuit of our energies will largely be regulated thereby. Therefore does Christ here bid us, "Lay up for yourselves treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." That we may better understand and practice this command, two points are to be carefully and reverently considered: what this treasure is, and how a man may lay it up for himself—matters of the greatest weight, for in the practice thereof lies our salvation. As to the real treasure, which neither time nor the creature can mar, it is the true and living God, the triune Jehovah who made and governs all things: in Him alone is all genuine good and happiness to be found.

This is clear from such Scriptures as the Lord's statement to Abraham, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1); the words of Eliphaz to Job, "The Almighty shall be thy gold" (22:25, margin), and the declaration of David: "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance . . . I have a goodly heritage"—i.e., He is my treasure (Psa. 16:5, 6). Yet let it be said emphatically that it is God as He is revealed in Christ who is our Treasure, for out of Christ He is "a consuming fire." God incarnate is our true treasure: for in Him are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3); our very life is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). To what is the

Apostle there referring? Why, as the previous verse shows, to that which God has treasured up for His people in a crucified Christ: the Lord Jesus is the great Fountain and Storehouse of all true blessings communicated from God to the saints, and therefore do they exclaim, “Of His fullness (as out of a rich treasury) have we all received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). Would you have remission of sins and righteousness with God? then Christ was “made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Would you have everlasting well-being? then Christ Himself is “The true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). Whatever you need—wisdom to direct, strength to energize, comfort to assuage grief, cleansing for defilement—all is to be found in the Saviour.

How may we lay up for ourselves in Heaven the Divine and durable riches which are to be found in Christ? First, by faith’s appropriation: “as many as received Him” (John 1:12)—so that I can say, “my Beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song. 2:16). God in Christ becomes our everlasting portion when we surrender to and accept Him as He is offered to us in the Gospel. Second, by daily communion with Christ, drawing from His “unsearchable riches” (Eph. 3:8). “Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42). And what was that “good part”? why, to sit at His feet and drink in His word (v. 39). Third, by emulating the example which Christ has left us. And what did that example consist of? why, complete self-abnegation, living wholly in subjection to God—for which he was richly rewarded (see Phil. 2:5-11). Fourth, by acting as His stewards and using the goods He has entrusted to us by laying them out to His glory (see Luke 12:33; Heb. 6:10, etc.).

Most all will say they hope for happiness from God in the next world, but what do they *now* make their chief good? What are they most taken up with, both in the pursuit and the enjoyment? It is at this point each of us must examine and test himself. What things do my soul most favour and relish? The things of the world or of God (see Rom. 8:5)? Which seasons of time do I regard as lost or as most gainful? Which are my days of richest income? Of the Sabbath the wicked ask, “when will it be gone?” But the healthy saint declares, “A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand” (Psa. 84:10)—because of the spiritual gains it brings in. What is dearest to my heart? What engages my most serious thoughts? This determines which I prize the more highly: earthly or Heavenly treasures.—A.W.P.



## THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

### 12. *Facing Danger.*

Unto one filled with such zeal for the Lord and love for His people the prolonged inactivity to which he was forced to submit must have proved severe trial unto Elijah. So energetic and courageous a Prophet would naturally be anxious to take advantage of the present distress of his countrymen: he would desire to awaken them to a sense of their grievous sins and urge them to return unto the Lord. Instead—so different are God’s ways from ours—he was required to remain in complete seclusion month after month and year after year. Nevertheless, his Master had a wise and gracious design in this trying discipline of His servant. Throughout his long stay by the brook Cherith Elijah proved the faithfulness and sufficiency of the Lord, and he gained not a little from his protracted sojourn at Zarephath. As the Apostle reveals both in 2 Corinthians 6:4 and 12:12, the first mark of an approved servant of Christ is the grace of spiritual “patience,” and this is developed by the trials of faith (James 1:3).

The years spent by Elijah at Zarephath were far from being wasted, for during his stay in the widow’s home he obtained confirmation of his Divine call, by the remarkable seal which was there given to his ministry. Thereby he approved himself to the conscience of his hostess: “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, that the Word of the LORD in thy mouth is Truth” (1 Kings 17:24). It was highly important that the Prophet should have such a testimony to the Divine source of his mission before entering upon the more difficult and dangerous part of it which yet lay before him. His own heart was blessedly confirmed and he was enabled to start afresh upon his public career with the assurance that he was a servant of Jehovah and that the Word of the Lord was indeed in his mouth. Such a seal to his ministry (the quickening of the dead child) and the approving of himself in the conscience of the mother was a grand encouragement for him as he set out to face the great crisis and conflict at Carmel.

What a message is there here for any ardent ministers of Christ whom Providence may for a season have laid by from public service. They are so desirous of doing good and promoting the glory of their Master in the salvation desirous of sinners and the building up of His saints, that they feel their enforced inactivity to be a severe trial. But let them rest assured that the Lord has some good reason for laying this restraint upon them, and therefore they should earnestly seek grace that they may not be fretful under it, nor take matters into their own hands in seeking to force a way out of it. Ponder the case of Elijah! He uttered no complaints nor did he venture out of the retirement into which God had sent him. He waited patiently for the Lord to direct him, to set him at liberty, and to enlarge his sphere of usefulness. Meanwhile, by fervent intercession, he was made a great blessing unto those in the home.

“And it came to pass after many days” (1 Kings 18:1). Let us attend to this expression of the blessed Spirit. It is not “after three years” (as was indeed the case), but “after many *days*.” There is here an important lesson for our hearts if we will heed it: we should live a day at a time, and count our lives by days. “Man that is born of a woman is of a few *days*, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down” (Job 14:1, 2). Such was the view of life taken by the aged Jacob: for when Pharaoh asked the Patriarch “How old art thou?” he answered “the *days* of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years” (Gen. 47:9). Happy are they whose constant prayer is, “So teach us to number our *days*, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psa. 90:12). Yet how prone we

are to count by years. Let us endeavour to live each day as though we knew it were our last.

“And it came to pass”: that is, the predetermined counsel of Jehovah was now actualized. The fulfillment of the Divine purpose can neither be retarded nor forced by us. God will not be hurried either by our petulance or our prayers. We have to wait His appointed hour, and when it strikes, He acts—it “comes to pass” just as He had foreordained. The precise length of time His servant is to remain in a certain place was predestined by Him from all eternity. “It came to pass after many days”: that is, over a *thousand* since the drought had commenced, “that the word of the Lord came to Elijah.” God had not forgotten His servant. The Lord never forgets any of His people, for has He not said, “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands: thy walls are continually before Me” (Isa. 49:16)? O that we might never forget Him, but “set the LORD always before us” (Psa. 16:8). “In the third year”: that is, of his stay at Zarephath.

“The word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth” (1 Kings 18:1). So that we may better understand the tremendous test of the Prophet’s courage which this command involved, let us seek to obtain some idea of what must now have been the state of that wicked king’s mind. We began this book by pondering the words, “And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (17:1). Now we are to consider the sequel to this. We have seen how it fared with Elijah during the lengthy interval, we must now ascertain how things were going with Ahab, his court, and his subjects. Dreadful indeed must be the state of things on earth when the heavens are shut up and no moisture is given for three years. “There was a *sore famine* in Samaria” (18:2).

“And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts” (v. 5). The barest possible outline is here presented, but it is not difficult to fill in the details. Israel had sinned grievously against the Lord, and so they were made to feel the weight of the rod of His righteous anger. What an humbling picture of God’s favoured people, to behold their king going forth to seek grass, if perchance he could find a little somewhere so that the lives of those beasts which remained might be saved. What a contrast from the abundance and glory of Solomon’s days! But Jehovah had been grossly dishonoured, His Truth had been rejected. The vile Jezebel had defiled the land by the pestilential influence of her false prophets and priests. The altars of Baal had supplanted that of the Lord, and therefore as Israel had sown the wind they must now be made to reap the whirlwind.

And what effect had the severe judgment of Heaven produced upon Ahab and his subjects? “And Ahab said unto Obadiah, go into the land unto all fountains of water and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.” There is not a single syllable here about *God*! not a word about the awful sins which had called down His displeasure upon the land! Fountains, brooks and grass were all that occupied Ahab’s thoughts—relief from the Divine affliction was all he cared about. It is ever thus with the reprobate. It was so with Pharaoh: as each fresh plague descended upon Egypt he sent for Moses and begged him to pray for its removal, and as soon as it was removed he hardened his heart and continued to defy the Most

High. Unless God is pleased to directly sanctify to our souls His chastisements, they profit us not. No matter how severe His judgments or how long they be protracted, man is never softened thereby unless God performs a work of grace *within* him. "And they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores, and *repented not* of their deeds" (Rev. 16:10, 11).

Nowhere is the awful depravity of human nature more grievously displayed than at this very point. First, men look upon a prolonged dry season as a freak of nature which must be endured, refusing to see the hand of *God* in it. Later, if it be borne in upon them that they are under a Divine judgment, they assume a spirit of defiance. A later Prophet in Israel complained of the people in his day for manifesting this vile temper: "O LORD, are not Thine eyes upon the Truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock" (Jer. 5:3). From this we may see how utterly absurd and erroneous are the teachings of Romanists on purgatory and of Universalists on Hell. "The imagined fire of purgatory or the real torments of Hell possess no purifying effect, and the sinner under the anguish of his sufferings will continually increase in wickedness and accumulate wrath to all eternity" (Thomas Scott).

"And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself" (1 Kings 18:5, 6). What a picture do these words present! Not only had the Lord no place in his thoughts, but Ahab says nothing about his people, who next to God should have been his chief concern. His evil heart seemed incapable of rising higher than horses and mules: such was what concerned him in the day of Israel's dire calamity. What a contrast between the low and groveling selfishness of this wretch and the noble spirit of the man after God's own heart. "And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand I pray Thee be against me and against my father's house" (2 Sam. 24:17). That was the language of a regenerate king when his land was trembling beneath God's chastening rod because of *his* sin.

As the drought continued and the distressing effects thereof became more and more acute we can well imagine the bitter resentment and hot indignation borne by Ahab and his vile consort against the one who had pronounced the terrible interdict of no dew nor rain. So incensed was Jezebel that she had "cut off (slain) the Prophets of the LORD" (1 Kings 18:4), and so infuriated was the king that he had sought diligently for Elijah in all the surrounding nations, requiring an oath from their rulers that they were not providing asylum for the man whom he regarded as his worst enemy, and cause of all his trouble. And now the Word of the Lord came to Elijah saying, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab"! If much boldness had been required when he was called upon to announce the awful drought, what courage was needed for him to now face the one who sought him with merciless rage.

"It came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself to Ahab." The movements of Elijah were all ordered of God: he was "not his own" but the servant of Another. When the Lord bade him, "hide thyself" (17:3), he must retire at His orders, and when He says, "Go show thyself," Elijah

must comply with the Divine will. Elijah's courage did not fail him, for "the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1). He declined not the present commission but went forth without murmur or delay. Humanly speaking it was highly dangerous for the Prophet to return unto Samaria, for he could not expect any welcome from the people who were in such sore straits nor any mercy from the king. But with the same unhesitating obedience as had previously characterized him, so now he complied with his Master's orders. Like the Apostle Paul he counted not his life dear unto himself, but was ready to be tortured and slain if that was the Lord's will for him.

"And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him" (1 Kings 18:7). A few extremists ("Separatists") have grossly traduced the character of Obadiah, denouncing him as an unfaithful compromiser, as one who sought to serve two masters. But the Holy Spirit has not stated he did wrong in remaining in Ahab's employ, nor intimated that his spiritual life suffered in consequence. Instead, He has expressly told us that "Obadiah feared the LORD greatly" (v. 3), which is one of the highest tributes which could be paid him. God has often given His people favour in the sight of heathen masters (as Joseph and Daniel), and has magnified the sufficiency of His grace by preserving their souls in the midst of the most unpromising environments. His saints are found in very unlikely places—as in "*Caesar's household*" (Phil. 4:22).

There is nothing wrong in a child of God holding a position of influence if he can do so without the sacrifice of principle. On the contrary, it may enable him to render valuable service to the cause of God. Where would Luther and the Reformation have been, humanly speaking, had it not been for the Elector of Saxony? And what would have been the fate of our own Wycliffe, if John O'Gaunt had not constituted him his ward? As the governor of Ahab's household, Obadiah was undoubtedly in a most difficult and dangerous position, yet so far from bowing his knee to Baal, he was instrumental in saving the lives of many of God's servants. Though surrounded by so many temptations, he preserved his integrity. It is also to be carefully noted that when Elijah met him, he uttered no word of reproach unto Obadiah. Let us not be too hasty in changing our situation, for the Devil can assail us in one place just as easily as in another.

As Elijah was on his way to confront Ahab, he met the pious governor of the king's household, "And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou my lord Elijah?" (v. 7). Obadiah recognized Elijah, yet he could scarcely believe his eyes. It was remarkable that the Prophet had survived the merciless onslaught of Jezebel on the servants of Jehovah: it was still more incredible to see him here, alone, journeying into Samaria. Most diligent search had long been made for him, but in vain, and now he comes unexpectedly upon him. Who can conceive the mixed feelings of awe and delight as Obadiah gazed upon the man of God, by whose word the awful drought and sore famine had almost completely desolated the land? Obadiah at once showed the greatest respect for him and did obeisance to him. "As he had shown the tenderness of a father to the sons of the Prophets, so he showed the reverence of a son to the father of the Prophets, and by this made it appear he did indeed fear the Lord greatly" (Matthew Henry).

"And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here" (v. 8). The Prophet's courage did not fail him. He had received orders from God to "show himself unto Ahab," and therefore he made no attempt to conceal his identity when interrogated by the governor. Let us shrink not to boldly declare our Christian discipleship when chal-

lenged by those who meet us. It is also to be duly noted that Elijah honoured Ahab, wicked though he was, by speaking of him to Obadiah as “thy lord.” It is the duty of inferiors to show respect to their superiors; of subjects concerning their sovereign, of servants concerning their master. We must render to all that to which their office or station entitles them. It is no mark of spirituality to be vulgar in our conduct or brusque in our speech. God commands us to “Honour the king” (1 Peter 2:17)—because of his *office*—whether he be an Ahab or a Nero.

“And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy Servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?” (1 Kings 18:8, 9). It was only natural that Obadiah should wish to be excused from so perilous an errand. First, he asks *wherein* he had offended either the Lord or His Prophet that he should be asked to be the messenger of such distasteful tidings to the king—sure proof that his own conscience was clear! Second, he lets Elijah know of the great pains which his royal master had taken in endeavouring to track down the Prophet and discover his hiding place: “As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom wither my lord hath not sent to seek thee” (v. 10). Yet in spite of all their diligence they were not able to discover him—so effectually did God secure him from their malice. Utterly futile is it for man to attempt to hide when the Lord seeks him out; equally useless is it for him to seek when God hides anything from him.

“And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here” (v. 11). Surely you are not serious in making such a request. Do you not know the consequence will be fatal to me if I am unable to make good such a declaration? “And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth” (v. 12). He was afraid that Elijah would again mysteriously disappear, and then his master would likely be enraged because he had not arrested the Prophet, and certainly he would be furious if he found himself imposed upon by discovering no trace of him when he duly arrived at this spot. Finally, he asks, “Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the Prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord’s Prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?” (v. 13). Obadiah made reference to these noble and daring deeds of his not in any boastful spirit, but for the purpose of attesting his sincerity. Elijah reassured him with an oath, and Obadiah obediently complied with his request: “And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him today. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah” (vv. 15, 16).—A.W.P.

## THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S IMPOTENCY.

### 6. *Its Problem.*

We have now arrived at the most difficult part of our subject, and much wisdom from above is needed if we are to be preserved from error on the right hand or the left. It has been well said that Truth is like a narrow path running between two precipices. The figure is an apt one, for fatal consequences attend those which depart from the teaching of God's Word, no matter which direction that departure may take. It is so here with the doctrine we are now treating of. It matters little whether the total bondage of the fallen creature under evil and his utter inability to perform that which is good in the sight of God be repudiated and the freedom of the natural man be insisted upon, or whether his complete spiritual impotency be affirmed and at the same time his responsibility to perform that which is pleasing unto God be denied. In either case the effect is equally disastrous: in the former, the sinner is given a false confidence; in the latter, he is reduced to fatalistic inertia. In either case the *real* state of man is grossly misrepresented.

Those who have sought to follow us carefully through the present series must have felt the force of the difficulties which we now desire to face—and if the Spirit is pleased to enable, throw some light thereon toward their solution. Such questions as these must have occurred to thoughtful people. If the carnal mind be such fearful enmity against God that it is not subject unto His law “neither indeed can be,” then why does He continue to press its demands upon us and insist that we meet its requirements under pain of eternal death? If the Fall has rendered man morally helpless and reduced him to the point where he is “without strength,” then with what propriety can he be called upon to render obedience unto the Divine precepts? If man be so thoroughly depraved that he is the slave of sin, wherein lies his accountability to live unto the glory of God? If man is born under “the bondage of corruption” how can he possibly be “without excuse” in connection with the sins which he commits?

In seeking answers to these and similar questions we must of necessity confine ourselves to what is clearly revealed thereon in Holy Writ. We say “of necessity,” for unless we forsake our own thoughts (Isa. 55:7) and completely submit our minds unto God's, we are certain to err. In theory this is granted, by most professing Christians, yet in practice it is only too often set aside: in the general it is conceded, but in particular it is ignored. A highly trained intellect may draw what appears to be incontestable conclusions from a Scriptural premise, yet though logic cannot refute them, nevertheless the practice of Christ and His Apostles manifest them to be false. On the one hand we may take the fact that the Lord has given orders for His Gospel to be preached unto every creature: then must we not infer that the sinner has it in his own power to either accept or reject the same? Such an inference certainly appears reasonable, yet it is erroneous. On the other hand take the fact that the sinner is spiritually impotent: then is it not a mockery to bid him come unto Christ? Such an inference certainly appears reasonable; yet it is false.

It is at this very point that most of Christendom has been deluged with such a flood of errors. Most of the leading denominations *began* by taking the Word of God as the foundation and substance of their creed. But alas, almost at once that foundation was turned into a platform upon which the proud intellect of men was exercised and in a very short time human reason—logical and plausible—supplanted Divine revelation. Men sought to work out theological systems and articles of faith that were thoroughly “consistent,” which—unlike the workings of both nature and providence—contained in them no seem-

ing “contradictions” or “absurdities,” but which commended themselves unto their fellows. But this was nothing less than a presumptuous attempt to compress the Truth of God into man-made molds, to reduce that which issued from the Infinite into terms comprehensible to finite minds. It is only another sad example of that egotism which refuses to receive what it cannot understand.

It is true, blessedly true, that there is perfect harmony in all parts of Divine Truth. How can it be otherwise, since *God* is the Author thereof? Yet so blind are men that they cannot perceive this perfect harmony. Some cannot discern the consistency between the infinite love and grace of God and His requiring His own Son to pay such a costly satisfaction to His broken Law. Some cannot see the consistency between the everlasting mercy of God and the eternal punishment of the wicked, insisting that if the former be true the latter is impossible. Some cannot see the congruity of Christ satisfying every requirement of God on behalf of His people and the imperative necessity of holiness and obedience in them if they are to benefit thereby; or between their Divine preservation and the certainty of destruction were they to finally apostatize. Some cannot see the accordance between the Divine foreordination of our actions and of our freedom therein. Some cannot see the agreement between efficacious grace in the conversion of sinners and the needs-be for the exercise of their faculties in a way of duty. Some cannot see the concurrence of the total depravity or spiritual impotency of man and his responsibility to be completely subject unto God’s will.

As a sample of what we have referred to in the last two paragraphs, take the following quotation. “We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance—these terms signifying that it is every man’s duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe (Gen. 6:5, 8:21; Matt. 15:19; Jer. 17:9; John 6:44, 65). We deny, also, that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. So that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God (John 12:39, 40; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 8:7, 8; 1 Cor. 4:7). We believe that it would be unsafe, from the brief records we have of the way in which the Apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely different circumstances. And we further believe that an assumption that others have been inspired as the Apostles were has led to the grossest errors amongst both Romanists and professed Protestants. Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption.”

It may come as a surprise unto many of our readers to learn that the above are a (verbatim and full) quotation from the “Articles of Faith” of a Baptist denomination (or “society”) in England with a considerable membership, and which will permit no man to enter their pulpits who does not solemnly subscribe to and sign his name to the same. Yet such is the case, and we may add that these Articles of Faith accurately express the belief of the great majority of the “Primitive Baptists” in the U.S.A. In consequence, the Gospel of Christ is deliberately withheld from the unsaved and no appeals are addressed unto them to close with the Gospel offer and receive Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. Need we wonder that fewer and fewer are coming forth in their midst to testify of a Di-

vine work of grace wrought in their hearts, and that many of their churches have already ceased to be?

It is a good thing that many of the Lord's people are sounder of heart than the creeds held in their heads, yet that does not excuse them for subscribing to what is flagrantly unscriptural. It is far from being a pleasant task to expose the fallacy of these Articles of Faith, for we have some very dear friends committed to the same; yet we feel we should be failing in our duty unto them if we made no effort to convince them of their errors. Let us then examine, briefly, these Articles. First, they deny that it is the duty of every man who hears the Gospel to spiritually and savingly repent and believe, and this notwithstanding the fact that it has been the uniform practice of well nigh all the true servants of Christ in every generation (including the Reformers and nine-tenths of the godly Puritans), but also in the very face of plain teaching of Holy Writ to the contrary. We will not supply quotations from the writings of those most used of the Spirit in the past, but confine ourselves unto God's Word.

God Himself "now commandeth all man everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). What could possibly be plainer than that? There is no room for any quibbling, misunderstanding, or evasion: it means just what it says, and says just what it means. The framers of those Articles, then, are taking direct issue with the Most High. It is because of his "hardness and impenitent heart" that the sinner treasures up unto himself "wrath against the day of wrath" (Rom. 2:5). "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, *because* he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:18, 19). Here, too, it is impossible to fairly evade the force of our Lord's language: He holds it to be the duty of all who hear the Gospel to savingly believe on Himself, and declares that rejecters are condemned because they do not believe, and therefore it is that when He returns it will be "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that *obey not* the Gospel" (2 Thess. 1:8).

Next we may note that the framers of these Articles follow their denial by referring to six verses of Scripture, the first four of which treat of the desperate wickedness of the natural man's heart and the last two with his complete inability to turn unto Christ until Divinely enabled. These passages are manifestly alluded to in support of the contention made: the real pertinency of them to the point under discussion each reader must decide for himself. The only relevancy they can possess is on the supposition that they establish a premise which requires us to draw the conclusion so dogmatically expressed: in other words, we are asked to believe that since fallen man is totally depraved we must necessarily infer that he is not a fit subject to be exhorted to perform spiritual acts. Thus, when analyzed, this Article is seen to consist of nothing more than a piece of *human reasoning*.

Not only does the substance of this Article of Faith consist of nothing more substantial and reliable than a mental inference, but when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary it is found to clash with other Scriptures: that is, with the practice of God's own servants recorded therein. For example, we do not find the sweet Psalmist of Israel accommodating his exhortations to the sinful inability of the natural man. Far from it: David called upon the ungodly to, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed ye judges of the earth: serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all



they that put their trust in Him" (Psa. 2:10-12). David did not withhold these counsels because they were such rebels that they would not and could not render their heart's allegiance to the King of kings, but uncompromisingly and bluntly bade them do so, whether they could or not.

It was the same with the Prophets. If ever a man addressed an unregenerate congregation it was when the Tishbite spake to the idolatrous Israelites: "Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God follow Him, but if Baal then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). That exhortation was not restricted to the remnant of renewed souls, but was addressed to that nation indiscriminately. It was a plain call for them to perform a spiritual duty, for them to exercise their will and choose between God and the devil. In like manner we find Isaiah called upon the degenerate generation of his day: "Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well" (1:16, 17). One of them went so far as to say to his hearers, "make you a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek. 18:31) yet he was in perfect accord with his fellow Prophet who taught the helplessness of man in those memorable questions, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard his spots?" These men, then, did not decide they must preach only that which lay in the power of their hearers to comply with.

The words, "We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever," will strike the vast majority of God's people as far too sweeping. They will readily allow that fallen man possesses no *power* at all to perform any spiritual acts, yet they will also insist that nothing prevents the spiritual obedience of any sinner except his own unwillingness. Man by nature, that is, as he originally left the hands of his Creator, was endowed with full capability to meet his Maker's requirements; nor has the Fall robbed him of a single faculty, and it is his retention of all his faculties which constitutes him still a responsible creature. Of the last four passages referred to (John 12:39, etc.) two of them related to the spiritual impotency of fallen man and the other two unto Divine enablement imparted to those who are saved.

With regard to the other Articles affirming the belief that it "would be unsafe" for us now to derive rules for ministerial address from the way in which the Apostles spoke to their hearers: this is their summary method of disposing of all those passages of Scripture in Old and New Testaments alike which are directly opposed to their theory. Since the Lord Jesus Himself hesitated not to say unto the people, "repent ye and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15), surely His servants today need not have the slightest hesitation in following His example. If ministers of the Word are not now to find their guidance and rules from the practice of their Master and His Apostles, then *where* shall they look for them? Must each one be a rule unto himself? or must they perforce place themselves under the domination of self-made popes? These very men who are such sticklers for "consistency" are not consistent with themselves, for when it comes to matters of church polity they take the practice of the Apostles for their guidance! Lack of space prevents further comments on this occasion.—A.W.P.

### THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

We have seen that the justice of God in His government of this world is manifested in the consciences of men and in the dispensations of Providence. Let us now behold how it is evidenced in *the work of redemption*. Here it has pleased the Most High to give a signal demonstration of His righteousness according to the requirements of that law which He has framed. Nowhere are the principles of the Divine administration exhibited so plainly as here, yet nowhere, we may add, is it so imperative for us to be completely subject to the Scriptures if our thoughts thereon are to honour the Lord God. If the works of creation contain mysteries which are beyond our powers to solve, and if the dispensations of Providence are often sorely perplexing, the yet grander work of redemption—God's masterpiece—must fill with reverent awe those who endeavour to contemplate its method and meaning. Only as we interpret by the light of Holy Writ the amazing anomaly of the Just suffering for the unjust shall we be preserved from the most horrible errors.

In connection with the work of redemption we are confronted with the astonishing spectacle of a Person whom even His worst enemies acknowledged to be free from the slightest stain of impurity. And of whose moral conduct Heaven itself testified an unqualified approbation, spending His days in such affliction and ending His career in such anguish that He was denominated "the Man of Sorrows." If guilt precedes affliction and is the cause of it, then to behold the Holy One enduring the unabated curse of the Law presents a problem which human wisdom is utterly incapable of solving. Yea, it is at *this* very point that the blasphemies of infidels have raved the loudest. But this is exactly what Scripture leads us to expect, for it plainly tells us that the preaching of Christ crucified is "unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness." Yet this same passage at once adds, "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23, 24).

The light of Divine revelation removes what is a stumblingblock to those who walk in darkness. So far from the Scriptures uttering the least apology for God in His appointment of Christ unto death, they declare, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to *declare His righteousness* for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." So far from the death of Christ casting the slightest reflection upon God's justice, this very passage repeats: "To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be *just* and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-26). The Lord Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin has been exhibited for this very end, to demonstrate the righteousness of God in this greatest transaction of all time, so that He now acquits the guiltiest transgressor who trusts in the Saviour without infringing the rights of His government; yea, manifesting and magnifying His very justice in so doing.

Though personally innocent of the slightest infraction of God's Law, yea, though rendering to it a perfect and perpetual obedience, yet the Lord Jesus Christ suffered vicariously as the Substitute of His people. Nor was this fearful sacrifice forced upon Him against His own will: rather did He freely assume the office of Surety and voluntarily discharge its duties. It must ever be borne in mind that He who presented Himself as the Sponsor of God's elect possessed rights and prerogatives which belong to no mere creature. He was complete master of His own life. He voluntarily assumed our nature and held His life for the purpose of surrendering it as a ransom for us. He Himself made this

unmistakably plain when He declared, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I *lay it down of Myself*. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17, 18). If One who was innocent voluntarily received the wages of sin, then God's hatred of sin was unmistakably manifested, the authority of His government maintained, and the requirements of His justice fully satisfied.

From earliest times this apparent travesty of justice—an innocent victim being slaughtered in the place of the guilty—held a prominent place in the Divine appointments for His people. The Divine institution of propitiatory sacrifices and their abundant use under the economy God framed, was solemnly enforced by that penal statute, "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set My face against that soul that eateth blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:10, 11). Of such frequent application, of such varied utility, and of such high importance was the expiatory *blood* of sacrifices that the Holy Spirit moved an Apostle to say, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

What striking and emphatic declarations are those: the blood makes an atonement for the soul—almost all things were purged by blood—no remission without the shedding of blood. As no blood was expiatory except that which was poured out in sacrifice *to God*, that which brought *death* on the victim, and that in which the death of a victim was vicarious—God kept constantly before His people under the typical system of worship the fact that pardon would not be dispensed to transgressors nor communion with Himself enjoyed except in strict connection with a display of punitive justice. But though the propitiatory sacrifices were so many testimonies to Jehovah's purity, so many evidences of His righteousness, yet in their nature, application and efficacy they did not extend to the burdened conscience but were limited to the removal of ceremonial defilement and to a typical prefiguration of the Messiah's priestly work. They were so far from fully exhibiting the governmental perfections of God that they were merely shadows and pre-intimations of that which was to be manifested when "the fullness of time should come."

"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. . . by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:4-10). Here is the grand transition from the *shadows* to the Substance. The typical sacrifices were inadequate for displaying the righteousness of God, and therefore were they superceded by the all-sufficient Sacrifice. None other than the Son of God Himself took upon Him our humanity (immaculately conceived) and came into this world to do in reality what had been previously prefigured of Him.

In the above passage our blessed Redeemer stands forth as a voluntary victim, completely qualified to make full expiation of sin. Confident of His own perfect qualifications to perform the arduous work, absolutely willing to undergo all the bitterness of the

sufferings involved therein, he announced His readiness to discharge the greatest undertaking of all. But let us carefully note, once more, how everything is resolved unto the Divine WILL. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:9): that will which had been formulated in His "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11), which had been expressed in the terms of the Everlasting Covenant, which had been freely accepted by the Mediator Himself, and which had been made known in the Scriptures of Truth. That "will" involved the magnifying of God's Law and rendering it honourable (Isa. 42:21). It involved the Son's becoming the federal Representative of His people, His entering into the office of Surety, His serving as their Substitute, and His making expiation for their sins. And by that same "will" we are saved. How clearly this confirms what we have said in a previous article.

It would take us too far afield for us now to enter into a discussion of the nature, design, and effects of the Atonement, rather must we confine ourselves to the relation which the Satisfaction of Christ had unto the demonstrating of God's governmental perfections under the economy He had instituted. The fundamental feature of that economy is that the Lord God has placed His rational creatures under law, and that He administers this law with strict impartiality, enforcing its sanctions without respect of persons. The climactic proof of this appears in the plan God formed for the salvation of His elect. He did not sovereignly pardon their iniquities without any satisfaction being rendered to His broken Law, but appointed His own Son to enter their stead and place and be made a curse for them, experiencing in His own Person the unabated penalty of that Law, so that they may be righteously discharged. This it is which alone explains the unparalleled sufferings of the Saviour.

What has just been pointed out alone accounts for the agony of our Redeemer prior to the Cross. Before any human hand was laid upon Him, before any human enemy came near Him, He exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). Behold Him prostrate in the Garden: He was in an agony of mental distress: He sweat great drops of blood: engaged in "strong crying and tears." Observe Him on the cruel Tree. With unmeasurable magnanimity He interceded for His crucifiers. With royal majesty and unparalleled mercy He allotted a place in Paradise to one of the malefactors dying by His side. But before He yielded up His spirit He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" There is only one adequate cause for such unspeakable anguish, namely, His vicarious Character, His bearing imputed sin (for He had none of His own), His undergoing the curse of the Law in the stead of those who were justly condemned by it.

Scripture speaks so plainly on this momentous subject that there is no excuse for any misunderstanding of its meaning. Christ was "wounded for *our* transgressions, bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him" (Isa. 53:5). And why so? Because God made His Son to be "sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), because "the Lord made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him" (Isa. 53:6), because "His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). And what was the consequence? This—Jehovah cried, "Awake O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the Shepherd" (Zech. 13:7). Under the regime God has instituted, sin must be punished wherever it be found and no exception was made even of the spotless Lamb when the iniquities of His people were transferred to Him. Hence we are told that the Sinbearer was "smitten of God" and again, "it pleased the LORD to bruise Him" (Isa. 53:4, 10).

It is, then, in the work of redemption that we behold the clearest, the most solemn, and yet the grandest display of God's righteousness. Therein we learn His estimate of sin, His holy abhorrence of it, the nature and severity of His sentence upon it. Not only does the work of redemption exhibit the exceeding riches of Divine mercy in the pardon of deservedly condemned criminals, but it manifests the inexorable and awe-inspiring character of Divine justice in the tremendous punishment of sin inflicted upon the Holy Lamb. The more we prayerfully contemplate the Father's conduct in connection with the obedience and sufferings of His dear Son, the more clearly do we behold Him vindicating the honour of His broken Law, satisfying the claims of His penal justice, furnishing incontestable proof of His equity and veracity, and thereby is He set forth as One who is infinitely worthy to superintend the universe and to govern this world.

Finally, the justice of God will be openly manifested *at the end of this world*, when the present administration terminates: then will be "the day of wrath and *revelation of the righteous judgment of God*" (Rom. 2:5). The ends of justice, so far as they consist in retribution, would be answered by the sentence pronounced upon every individual immediately after death, for it is enough that the state of men in the next world conform to their characters and conduct in this. But the Grand Assize is designed for the final manifestation of God's justice before an assembled universe, to bring it out of any obscurity and uncertainty in which it is partly veiled under the varied dispensations of Providence, and to demonstrate once and for all that the Ruler of Heaven and earth is no respecter of persons. Then shall the books be opened, fair trial accorded, all the evidence adduced and every man shall "receive according to his works." The wicked will then be convicted that each one has received the due reward of his iniquities, while the righteous will exclaim, "Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Rev. 6:7).

Let us now endeavour, though very briefly, to improve this important subject in a doctrinal and practical manner. First, such manifestations of the Divine justice as have been before us should indeed promote the exercise of *deep humility* before God in all our devotional intercourse with Him. O fellow-Christian, if we apprehend in any measure this most solemn truth of the Divine justice, we must surely feel the propriety of that precept, "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28, 29). There is far more danger of real believers approaching the Father of mercies in a careless, carnal, and formal manner, than there is of them drawing near to Him under the influence of painful timidity or of a desponding temper. We should endeavour to acquire a settled habit of reminding ourselves that the Object of our worship is One who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." Such a view of God is adapted to arouse solemnity, excite reverence, and promote submission.

Second, such manifestations of Divine justice as have been before us should warm our hearts and enkindle *the spirit of praise*. O what a difference it makes whether that justice is for or against us. The justice is now *for* the weakest and most unworthy believer, for the simple but sufficient reason it was *against* his blessed Redeemer. Payment God cannot twice demand: first at our bleeding Surety's hand, and then again at ours. Because the sword of Divine justice was sheathed in the side of the Substitute, I go free. Because He received the wages of sin in my place, my debts are fully discharged. Because He rendered to the Law a vicarious obedience which magnified and made it honourable, His perfect righteousness is reckoned to my account. Because I have put my trust in His fin-

ished work, I am justified from all things. Surely, then, I must exclaim, “my mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day” (Psa. 71:15). O what praise and devotion are due Him. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10).

Third, such manifestations of Divine justice as have been before us constitute an unspeakably solemn *warning to the unsaved*. While the consideration of God’s righteousness must fill believers with peace and joy, yet it is a fearful thing for the Christless to contemplate. It is a justice which is inflexible, inexorable, and immutable. It is a justice which is never set aside by sentimental considerations, and which cannot be bought with promises or bribed by tears. The solemn truth of God’s justice addresses the consciences of those who are secure in their sins, saying, “What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, call upon thy God.” It speaks with the voice of thunder, maintaining the reasonableness of that obedience which the Law requires, the equity of the sanctions by which it is enforced, and the inflexibility of the Legislator to execute His threatened curse upon its transgressors. If God “*spared not* His own Son,” most certainly He will not spare any who finally despise and reject Him. Even now His wrath is upon them (John 3:36), and except they repent, soon shall they feel the full force of it in the Lake of Fire.—A.W.P.

### OUR ANNUAL LETTER

“Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee,” (1 Tim. 4:13-16). This is an important part of the counsels which the Apostle was moved by the Holy Spirit to give unto a younger brother in the ministry. Salutory counsels are they at any time, and most pertinent for these evil days, when so many temptations are presented unto the servants of Christ to compromise their holy calling, turn aside to things of secondary importance and divide their time and energy between matters which relate to the spiritual and eternal and those pertaining to the material and temporal. Such a snare will be avoided if these exhortations are duly taken to heart.

Never was it more essential that ministers of the Gospel *should concentrate upon* their sacred and distinctive work. Theirs is a full-time task which calls for the exercise of all the gifts which God has bestowed upon them, and the doing with all their might that which the Lord has appointed them to do. “Give thyself *wholly* to them” allows for no dissipation of strength, no attempting to serve two masters, no dividing of interests. That which does not minister to the preacher’s own spirituality must be excluded; that which does not contribute unto the effectiveness of his labours, to glorify his Master and edify His people, must be rigidly avoided. Loyalty to Christ and love for those He shed His blood to redeem must exclude every other consideration. This is not to disparage the relative worth of other objects, but is simply insisting that first things are to be put first, not merely on the Lord’s Day, but all through the week as well.

“Give thyself wholly to them” is what has regulated our own course and Magazine policy during the past year. A few of our readers (very few we trust!) may have been disappointed at finding in these pages no articles devoted to the making of comments on current events, no reference to the progress of the war, and no attempts to show the position of present national convulsions in the scheme of Divine prophecy. We have not done so because we have not sought to profit from the folly of those who pursued such a course in the last great war. We feel it is altogether outside of our province, because we can perceive no spiritual benefit for the soul, and especially because this word, “Give thyself *wholly* to them” (Divine things) positively precludes our doing so.

We have therefore endeavoured to remain true to the title of this Magazine and give our readers studies *in the Scriptures*. The contents of Holy Writ are not ephemeral or evanescent, but are of enduring moment, and (if this war continues) will be of unchanging value to God’s people long after the present commotion among the nations is over. The Word of the Lord endures forever and its precepts are pertinent and its principles applicable to each generation that comes and goes. “Give thyself wholly to them” is as truly the great Commander’s order to each of His officers today as it was in the lifetime of Timothy. Then let us see to it that we heed the same: by so doing we will not only honour our Master and be of most help to His people, but at the same time render the highest possible service to the State.

True, it has not always been easy to concentrate the mind on spiritual things for protracted periods, nor is it a simple matter to continue writing articles which call for the utmost care while air-raids are in progress, yet the execution of such tasks has enabled us to prove in a new way the sufficiency of Divine grace. “God is able to make all grace

abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8): yes "*all* grace"—prompting grace, persevering grace, preserving grace. It has been a constant source of comfort through these trying months to know that God has given us a place in the hearts and prayers of so many of His dear people, and He has certainly responded to their supplications and intercession on our behalf. We are grateful unto each one who has sought to hold up our hands, and ask for a continuance of their loving co-operation.

We have much cause to praise God for His abounding goodness unto us during the past 12 months. Except for slight colds and their attendant inconveniences, the editor and his wife have been preserved in good health all through another year. So far as we have been able to ascertain out of all the thousands of pieces of mail intended for us, or sent out by us to the four corners of the earth, not a single one has been lost—nothing is too small to commit into the keeping of the Lord! Though the number of names on our mailing list is the lowest since we commenced publishing, yet we close the year with the largest credit-balance we have ever had. In spite of advancing apostasy, the increasing exposure of an empty profession, and the spiritual coldness of many of the Lord's people, there are still a few who welcome that which searches, and refuse not that which condemns them. Letters to hand from far distant parts show that, under God, our labours are not in vain.

And what of the future? That is in the hands of God: but if He spares us, we shall try our best to continue publishing for another year. If our desire is realized, we propose to devote the cover-page articles to the Ten Commandments for loving obedience unto them lies at the foundation of all genuine piety. The series on the Sermon on the Mount and the Doctrine of Man's Spiritual Impotency are to be continued, as also those on the life of Elijah. We hope to address a number of articles unto those who make no Christian profession. We have already obtained permission to place this magazine in some of the reading rooms of the Forces, and would ask special prayer on this effort, and that God may grant the "Studies" access to still more in the Services! We expect the 1940 Bound Volume to be ready early in December: 4/3 (one Dollar) post-paid. It will make things easier for us if friends would please order as early as possible. We sincerely trust that none to whom we are now sending two or three copies of each current issue will ask us to send only one. Let each of us seek grace to heed that exhortation: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). With loving greetings and every good wish, we remain, yours by Divine mercy: A.W. and V.E. Pink.

*Later.* Since writing the above we received a call, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, to once more move our tent. During the last few months, and especially since the German air-raids increased so much both in frequency and intensity, many of our friends have been much concerned about our welfare, and numbers of them suggested our moving to a less vulnerable area. But we did not feel free to accept any of their loving suggestions. It was the Lord who directed us to Hove (which joins on to Brighton) four and a half years ago, and we dared not leave till He made it very clear that His time for us to do so had come. Like Elijah at Cherith, we awaited "the word of the Lord." And how gracious He is: He knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust. Just when the strain was becoming too much for our frail bodies, our Master made it plain He had provided a haven of rest for us some 750 miles distant.



An old friend in Scotland renewed his kind invitation for us to sojourn with him. It meant travelling across the city of London, and a bomb fell near the station where we were waiting for our train, but we were unharmed. It meant a 500 mile journey to Glasgow, but we reached it safely, and had a week's rest with dear ones who devotedly ministered to our every need, so that we were much refreshed both spiritually and physically. Then another railway journey of 170 miles; a 12 hours' sea trip, which was accomplished without any untoward event. A few days fellowship in the home of another kind friend and his wife, and then a short sea trip and our "haven" was safely reached. We are now situated on an island far removed from the scene of conflict, where we can quietly study and conduct the work of the magazine in peace, and what is still better, we are once more in a place where we can have fellowship with some of the choicest of God's people. Those who may have sent money orders made out to Hove need not worry, for they will be forwarded to us and (D.V.) cashed through our bank.

