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**STUDIES**  
**IN THE**  
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*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

# Contents

The Lordship of Christ .....	1
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	3
<i>60. The Call of Abraham (11:8)</i>	
The Life of David.....	11
<i>12. His Delivering of Keilah</i>	
Peace: True and False.....	16
Assurance .....	21
<i>5. Its Hindrances</i>	
Self-Judgment .....	26
Our Annual Letter .....	29

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*Studies in the Scriptures* appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God's people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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# STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

## THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Our present subject brings before us a very different aspect of the truth from that which engaged our attention in the last article—a greater contrast could scarcely be imagined—Christ the Servant, Christ the Sovereign, subject to the will of another, exercising His own imperial pleasure, and that, at the same season! Verily, “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). In passing, let it be pointed out that the seeming conflict between the divine justice and the divine mercy, between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, between the Christian’s being “under grace” (Rom 6:14) and yet “under law” (1Co 9:21), between salvation itself being both a “gift” (Eph 2:8) and a “reward” (Col 3:24), presents no greater paradox than the above. Our bounden duty is to believe *both* sides of the paradox as they are revealed in the Scriptures, going as far with each as Scripture goes and leaving with God the perfect consistency between them.

The Greek word for “lord” means one having personal right to rule, such as is exercised in the guiding and governing of a family. More properly it signifies a master or governor over servants, who are bound to obey him. Such a Governor and Ruler is Christ, whether we consider His title to this dominion or the exercise of it. He has this title to universal Lordship by creation (Joh 1:3)—having made all things. He has the right to dispose of them, by sustentation (Col 1:16)—as the Preserver, He has the right to rule all things, by divine appointment (Joh 3:35)—all things having been committed unto Him, by personal fitness (Col 1:19).

There is a twofold “Lordship” belonging to Christ. One which is natural, absolute, underived, pertaining to Him as He is simply considered as second person of the Trinity, to whom all the dignities and royalties of the divine nature do belong, equally as to the Father and the Holy Spirit, which Lordship in all Three is founded upon their joint concern in the

making of all things and also in the governing of them. But there is also another "Lordship" pertaining to Christ, namely, a derived and dispensatory one, which is established by the counsels of God for the effecting of all His works both for and unto Him, which Lordship is proper and peculiar to Christ considered as God-man Mediator, to whom as such "all power" or "authority" has been *given* unto him "in heaven and in earth" (Mat 28:18), "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (Joh 5:27).

It is this *delegated* or mediatorial Lordship of Christ which we are now to contemplate. It was of this that Peter spoke when he said, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Act 2:36). There is a "made" lordship of Him who yet, by virtue of it, made all things. Paul also referred to this when he said, "whom he hath appointed heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). "Heir" here is equivalent to "Lord" and "appointed" to "made." Christ's being "Lord" evidently imports an office and economy committed to Him and undertaken by Him, as "Christ" also doth.

As "Lord," Christ has been appointed by the Godhead to "*rule over* all things." He Himself avowed, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (Joh 17:2). Now it is a serious mistake to suppose that our blessed Redeemer only entered upon this office at His ascension, as it is to think that He has ceased to be Servant and no longer obeys in heaven. Luke 2:11 emphatically declares, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ *the Lord*." True, there was only an initial entering upon that office at His birth, the full assumption and exercise thereof awaiting His exaltation, nevertheless this, as we shall see, was real.

If we go carefully through the four Gospels with this thought before us, we shall catch many glimpses of Christ's execution of His Lordship even during the days of His flesh. Listen to His words when the poor leper came to Him for healing, "And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, *I will*; be thou clean" (Mat 8:3). See Him cursing the fig tree (Mat 21:19)—none could rightfully do so, save the Maker and Lord of it. Behold Him giving orders for the winds and waves to be still (Mat 8:26). Ponder His repeated, "Verily, verily, *I say* unto you." None other ever used such language. Observe Him authoritatively bidding disease to flee and the dead to arise. See Him casting out demons and causing them to quake before Him. What demonstrations were these that He, who had taken upon Him the form of a Servant, had *not* relinquished His Lordship. Appropriately was His name called "Wonderful" (Isa 9:6).

Again and again He referred to Himself in this character. To His disciples He said, "Pray ye therefore *the Lord of the harvest*, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Mat 9:38). When bidding them ask for the use of the ass and its colt He said, "Ye shall say, *the Lord* hath need of them" (Mat 21:3). He commended His apostles for owning Him as such: "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am" (Joh 13:13). His commissioning of His servants evidenced the same fact (Matt 10:5-7; 28:19). His implicit demand for obedience from His followers showed the same thing (Joh 14:15). His possession of the keys of death and hell (Rev 1:18) manifest His high dominion. His appointing of officers in the church exhibits His Lordship (Eph 4:11-12). His rule over the

churches demonstrates His sovereign dominion (Rev 1-3). His opening and shutting of doors for His servants (Rev 3:7) clearly displays His Lordship. His rewarding of His saints (Rev 22:12) witnesses to this truth. His destroying of His enemies (Mat 22:13) will solemnly attest it.

A word upon the character and scope of His Lordship. He is “Lord *of* all” (Act 10:36), “Lord *over* all” (Rom 10:12), and Lord *by* whom all creatures and things exist and consist, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1Co 8:6)—“one God” in three persons, “one Lord” or Mediator. All things are of God originally, by Christ derivatively. This fact will be universally acknowledged at the last day, when “every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is LORD” (Phi 2:10-11). He is not only a universal Lord, but an all-powerful one, for He “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to *subdue all* things unto himself” (Phi 3:21). He is an unrivalled Lord, the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1Ti 6:15).

We trust that what has been brought out above will enable the reader to distinguish clearly between the deity and the Lordship of Christ. In His person, He *is* very God of very God. But when He took manhood into union with Himself, as Mediator, the office of universal Lordship was delegated to Him. That office He assumed at His birth, executed throughout His earthly life, continues to discharge in heaven, and will for all eternity. Even on the new earth, the Lamb occupies the throne with God (Rev 22:1). May divine grace move each of us to say from the heart, “My Lord, and my God” (Joh 20:28). What are our responsibilities under such a Lord? First, to serve Him only—not sin and Satan, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Mat 4:10). He is to be served unreservedly, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord” (Col 3:23). He is to be served diligently, “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11). He is to be served perpetually, “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom 14:8). May divine grace enable us to heed that exhortation, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6).

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### *60. The Call of Abraham (11:8)*

“The scope of the apostle in this chapter is to prove that the doctrine of faith is an ancient doctrine and that faith hath been always exercised about things not seen, not liable to the judgment of sense and reason. He had proved both points by instances of the fathers before the flood and now he comes to prove them by the examples of those that were eminent for faith after the flood. And in the first place, he pitcheth upon Abraham—a fit

instance. He was the father of the faithful and a person of whom the Hebrews boasted. His life was nothing else but a continual practice of faith and therefore he insisteth upon Abraham longer than upon any other of the patriarchs. The first thing for which Abraham is commended in Scripture is his obedience to God, when He called him out of his country. Now the apostle shows this was an effect of faith" (Thomas Manton, 1660).

The second division of Hebrews 11 begins with the verse which is now to be before us. As pointed out in previous articles, Hebrews 11:4-7 present an outline of the life of faith. In verse 4, we are shown where the life of faith *begins*, namely, at that point where the conscience is awakened to our lost condition, where the soul makes a complete surrender to God, and where the heart rests upon the perfect satisfaction made by Christ our Surety. In verse 5, we are shown the *character* of the life of faith—a pleasing of God, a walking with Him, the heart elevated above this world of death. In verses 6-7, we are shown the *end* of the life of faith—a diligent seeking of God, a heart which is moved by His fear to use those means which He appointed and prescribed, issuing in the saving of the soul, and establishing its title to be an heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Wonderfully comprehensive are the contents of these opening verses and well repaid will be the prayerful student who ponders them again and again.

From Hebrews 11:8 to the end of the chapter, the Holy Spirit gives us fuller details concerning the life of faith, viewing it from different angles, contemplating varied aspects, and exhibiting the different trials to which it is subject, and the blessed triumphs which divine grace enables it to achieve. Fitly does this new section of our chapter open by presenting to us the case of Abraham. In his days, a new and important era of human history commenced. Hitherto God had maintained a general relation to the whole human race, but at the Tower of Babel that relation was broken. It was there that mankind, as a whole, consummated their revolt against their Maker, in consequence of which He abandoned them. To that point is to be traced the origin of "Heathendom." Romans 1:18-30 should be read in this connection. From this point onwards, God's dealings with men were virtually confined to Abraham and his posterity.

That a new division of our chapter commences at verse 8 is further evident from the fact that Abraham is designated "the *father* of all them that believe" (Rom 4:11), which means not only that he is (as it were) the earthly head of the whole election of grace, but the one after whose likeness his spiritual children are conformed. There is a family likeness between Abraham and the true Christian, for if we are Christ's, then we are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29), for "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal 3:7), which is evidenced by them doing "the works of Abraham" (Joh 8:39), for these are the marks of identification. In like manner, Christ declared of the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts [desires and behests] of your father ye will [are determined] to do" (Joh 8:44). The wicked bear the family likeness of the wicked one. The "fatherhood of Abraham" is twofold—natural, as the progenitor of a physical seed, spiritual, as the pattern to which his children are morally conformed.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb 11:8). In taking up the study of this verse, our first concern should be to ascertain its

meaning and message *for us today*. In order to discover this, we must begin by seeking to know what was shadowed forth in the great incident here recorded. A little meditation should make it obvious that the central thing referred to is the divine call of which Abraham was made the recipient. This is confirmed by a reference to Genesis 12:1, where we have the historical account of that to which the Spirit by the apostle here alludes. Further proof is furnished by Acts 7:2-3. This, then, must be our starting point.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are *the called* according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28) There are two distinct kinds of “calls” from God mentioned in Scripture—a general and a particular, an outward and an inward, an inoperative and an effectual. The general, external, and inefficacious “call” is given to all who hear the Gospel or come under the sound of the Word. *This call is refused* by all. It is found in such passages as the following, “Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man” (Pro 8:4); “For many be called, but few chosen” (Mat 20:16); “And sent his servant at suppertime to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:17-18); “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;” etc. (Pro 1:24-28).

The special, inward, and efficacious “call” of God comes only to His elect. It is responded to by each favoured one who receives it. It is referred to in such passages as the following, “The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (Joh 5:25); “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice . . . and other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice” (Joh 10:3-4, 16); “Whom he called, them he also justified” (Rom 8:30); “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1Co 1:26-29). This call is illustrated and exemplified in such cases as Matthew (Luk 5:27-28), Zacchaeus (Luk 19:5-6), Saul of Tarsus (Act 9:4-5).

The individual, internal, and invincible call of God is an act of sovereign grace, accompanied by all-mighty power, quickening those who are dead in trespasses and sins, imparting to them spiritual life. This divine call is regeneration, or the new birth, when its favoured recipient is brought “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1Pe 2:9). Now *this* is what is before us in Hebrews 11:8, which gives additional proof that this verse commences a new section of the chapter. The wondrous call which Abraham received from God is necessarily placed at the head of the Spirit’s detailed description of the life of faith. Necessarily, we say, for faith itself is utterly impossible until the soul has been divinely quickened.

Let us first contemplate the state that Abraham was in until and at the time God called him. To view him in his unregenerate condition is a duty which the Holy Spirit pressed upon Israel of old, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the *hole of the pit* whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you” (Isa 51:1-2). Help is afforded if we turn to Joshua 24:2, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they *served other gods.*” Abraham, then, belonged

to a heathen family and dwelt in a great city until he was seventy. No doubt he lived his life after the same manner as his fellows—content with the “husks” which the swine feed upon, with little or no serious thoughts of the Hereafter. Thus it is with each of God’s elect till the divine call comes to them and arrests them in their self-will, mad, and destructive course.

“The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran” (Act 7:2). What marvelous grace! The God of glory condescended to draw near and reveal Himself unto one that was sunk in sin, immersed in idolatry, having no concern for the divine honour. There was nothing in Abraham to deserve God’s notice, still less to merit His esteem. But more, not only was the *grace* of God here signally evident, but the *sovereignty* of His grace was displayed in thus singling him out from the midst of all his fellows. As He says in Isaiah 51:2, “I called him *alone*, and blessed him.” “Why God should not call his father and kindred, there can be no answer but this, God hath mercy on whom He will (See Rom 9:18). He calleth Isaac and refuseth Ishmael; loveth Jacob and hateth Esau; taketh Abel and leaveth Cain—even because He will, and for no cause that we know” (William Perkins, 1595).

“The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham” (Act 7:2). All that is included in these words, we know not, as to how God “appeared” unto him, we cannot say. But of two things we may be certain, for the first time in Abraham’s life, God became a *living reality* to him. Further he perceived that He was an all-glorious being. Thus it is, sooner or later, in the personal experience of each of God’s elect. In the midst of their worldliness, self-seeking, and self-pleasing, one day, He of whom they had but the vaguest notions, and whom they sought to dismiss from their thoughts, appears before their hearts—terrifying, awakening, and then attracting. Now it is they can say, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5).

O dear reader, our desire here is not simply to write an article, but to be used of God in addressing a definite message from Him straight to your inmost heart. Suffer us then to inquire, Do you know anything about what has been said in the above paragraph? Has God become a living reality to your soul? Has He really drawn near to you, manifested Himself in His awe-inspiring Majesty, and had direct and personal dealings with your soul? Or do you know no more about Him than what *others* write and say of Him? This is a question of vital moment, for if He does not have personal dealings with you here in a way of grace, He will have personal dealings with you hereafter, in a way of justice and judgment. Then, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near (Isa 55:6).

This, then, is one important aspect of regeneration—God graciously makes a personal revelation of Himself to the soul. The result is that He “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). The favoured individual in whom this miracle of grace is wrought is now brought out of that dreadful state in which he lay by nature, whereby “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14). So fearful is that state in which all the unregenerate lie, it is described as “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph 4:18). But at the



new birth the soul is delivered from the terrible darkness of sin and depravity into which the Fall of Adam has brought all his descendants and is ushered into the marvelous and glorious light of God.

Let us next consider the accompaniment of *terms* of the call which Abraham now received from God. A record of this is found in Genesis 12:1, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." What a testing of faith was this! What a trial to flesh and blood! Abraham was already seventy years of age and long journeys and the break-up of old associations do not commend themselves to elderly people. To leave the land of his birth, to forsake home and estate, to sever family ties and leave loved ones behind, to abandon present certainty for (what seemed to human wisdom) a future uncertainty, and go forth not knowing whither, must have seemed hard and harsh unto natural sentiment. Why, then, should God make such a demand? To prove Abraham, to give the death-blow to his natural corruptions, to demonstrate the might of His grace. Yet we must look for something deeper and that which applies directly to us.

As we have pointed out above, God's appearing to Abraham and His call of him speaks to us of that miracle of grace which takes place in the soul at regeneration. Now the evidence of regeneration is found in genuine *conversion*. It is that complete break from the old life, both inner and outer, which furnishes proof of the new birth. It is plain to any renewed mind that when a soul has been favoured with a real and personal manifestation of God, that a move or response is called for from him. It is simply impossible that he should continue his old manner of life. A new object is before him, a new relationship has been established, new desires now fill his heart, and new responsibilities claim him. The moment a man truly realizes that he has to do with God, there must be a radical change, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Co 5:17).

The call which Abraham received from God required a double response from him. He was to leave the land of his birth and forsake his own kindred. What, then is the *spiritual* significance of these things? Remember that Abraham was a *pattern* case, for he is the "father" of all Christians and the children must be conformed to the family likeness. Abraham is the prototype of those who are "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1). Now the spiritual application to us of what was adumbrated by the terms of Abraham's call is twofold—doctrinal and practical, legal and experimental. Let us, briefly, consider them separately.

"Get thee out of thy country" (Gen 12:1) finds its counterpart in the fact that the Christian is one who has, by grace, the redemptive work of Christ, and the miraculous operation of the Spirit, been delivered from his *old position*. By nature, the Christian was a member of "the world," the whole of which "lieth in wickedness" (1Jo 5:19) and so is headed for destruction. But God's elect have been delivered from this. Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father" (Gal 1:4). Therefore does He say unto His own, "because ye are *not of the world*, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (Joh 15:19).

“Get thee out of thy country” finds its fulfillment, first, in the Christian’s being delivered from his *old condition*, namely, “in the flesh.” “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom 6:6). He has now been made a member of a new family, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1Jo 3:1). He is now brought into union with a new “kindred,” for all born-again souls are his brethren and sisters in Christ, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are *not in the flesh*, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Rom 8:8-9). Thus, the call of God is a separating one—from our old standing and state, into a new one.

Now what has just been pointed out above is already, from the divine side, an accomplished fact. Legally, the Christian no longer belongs to “the world,” nor is he “in the flesh.” But this has to be entered into practically from the human side and made good in our actual experience. Because our “citizenship is in heaven” (Phi 3:20), we are to live here as “strangers and pilgrims.” A practical separation from the world is demanded of us, for “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (Jam 4:4). Therefore does God say, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . . come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2Co 6:14, 17). So too the “flesh,” still in us, is to be allowed no rein. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1); “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14); “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth” (Col 3:5).

The claims of Christ upon His people are paramount. He reminds them that, “Ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price” (1Co 6:19-20). Therefore does He say, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luk 14:26). The response is declared in, “They that are Christ’s *have* crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Thus the terms of the call which Abraham received from God are addressed to *our* hearts. A complete break from the old life is required of us.

Practical *separation from the world* is imperative. This was typed out of old in the history of Abraham’s descendants. They had settled down in Egypt—figure of the world—and after they had come under the blood of the Lamb, and before they entered Canaan (type of heaven), they *must* leave the land of Pharaoh. Hence too God says of our Surety “Out of Egypt have I called my Son” (Mat 2:15). The Head must be conformed to the members and the members to their Head. Practical mortification of *the flesh* is equally imperative. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die [eternally]: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live [eternally]” (Rom 8:13). “But he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:8).

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). This verse, read in the light of Genesis 12:1, clearly signifies that God demanded the supreme place in Abraham’s affections. His life was no longer to be regulated by self-will, self-love, self-pleasing. Self was to be entirely set aside, “crucified.” Henceforth, the will

and Word of God was to govern and direct him in all things. Henceforth he was to be a man without a *home* on earth, but seeking one in heaven and treading that path which alone leads thither.

Now it should be very evident from what has been said above that, regeneration or an effectual call from God is a *miraculous* thing, as far above the reach of nature as the heavens are above the earth. When God makes a personal revelation of Himself to the soul, this is accompanied by the communication of supernatural grace, which produces supernatural fruit. It was contrary to nature for Abraham to leave home and country and go forth “not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). Equally is it contrary to nature for the Christian to separate from the world and crucify the flesh. A miracle of divine grace has to be wrought within him, before any man will really deny self and live in complete subjection to God. And this leads us to say that, genuine cases of regeneration are much rarer than many suppose. The spiritual children of Abraham are very far from being a numerous company, as is abundantly evident from the fact that few indeed bear his likeness. Out of all the thousands of professing Christians around us, how many manifest Abraham’s faith or do Abraham’s works?

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). This verse, read in the light upon which we would fix our attention, is Abraham’s *obedience*. A saving faith is one which heeds the divine commands, as well as relies upon the divine promises. Make no mistake upon this point, dear reader, Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* him” (Heb 5:9). Abraham placed himself unreservedly in the hands of God, surrendered to His lordship, and subscribed to His wisdom as best fitted to direct him. And so must we or we shall never be “carried into Abraham’s bosom” (Luk 16:22).

Abraham “obeyed; and he went out” (Heb 11:8). There are two things there—“obeyed,” signifies the consent of his mind, “and went out,” tells of his actual performance. He obeyed not only in word, but in deed. In this, he was in marked contrast from the rebellious one mentioned in Matthew 21:30, “I go, sir, and went not.” “The first act of saving faith consists in a discovery and sight of the infinite greatness, goodness, and other excellencies of the nature of God, so as to judge it our duty upon His call, His command, and promise to deny ourselves, to relinquish all things, and to do so accordingly” (John Owen, 1616-1683). Such ought our obedience to be unto God’s call and to every manifestation of His will. It must be a simple obedience in subjection to His authority, without inquiring after the reason thereof, and without objecting any scruples or difficulties against it.

“Observe that faith, wherever it is, bringeth forth obedience. By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed God. Faith and obedience can never be severed, as the sun and the light, fire and heat. Therefore we read of the ‘obedience of faith’ (Rom 1:5). Obedience is faith’s daughter. Faith hath not only to do with the grace of God, but with the duty of the creature. By apprehending grace, it works upon duty, ‘faith which worketh by love’ (Gal 5:6). It fills the soul with the apprehensions of God’s love and then makes use of the sweetness of love to urge us to more work or obedience. All our obedience to God comes from love to God and our love comes from the persuasion of God’s love to us. The argument and discourse

that is in a sanctified soul is set down thus, 'I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Gal 2:20). Wilt thou not do this for God that loved thee? for Jesus Christ, that gave Himself for thee? Faith works towards obedience by commanding the affections" (Thomas Manton, 1680).

"He went forth *not* knowing whither he went" (Heb 11:8). How this demonstrates the reality and power of his faith—to leave a present possession for a future one. Abraham's obedience is the more conspicuous because at the time God called him, He did not specify which land he was to journey to, nor where it was located. Thus, it was by faith and not by sight, that he moved forward. Implicit confidence in the One who had called him was needed on the part of Abraham. Imagine a total stranger coming and bidding you follow him, without telling you where! To undertake a journey of unknown length, one of difficulty and danger, towards a land of which he knew nothing, called for real faith in the living God. See here the power of faith to triumph over fleshly disinclinations, to surmount obstacles, to perform difficult duties. Reader, is *this* the nature of *your* faith? Is your faith producing works which are not only *above* the power of mere nature to perform, but also directly *contrary* thereto?

Abraham's faith is hard to find these days. There is much talk and boasting, but most of it is empty words—the *works* of Abraham are conspicuous by their absence, in the vast majority of those who claim to be his children. The Christian is required to set his affections on things above and not on things below (Col 3:1). He is required to walk by faith and not by sight, to tread the path of obedience to God's commands and not please himself, to go and do whatever the Lord bids him. Even if God's commands appear severe or unreasonable, we must obey them, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1Co 3:18). "And He said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luk 9:23).

But such an obedience as God requires can only proceed from a *supernatural* faith. An unshakable confidence in the living God and unreserved surrender to His holy will, each step of our lives being ordered by His Word (Psa 119:105), can only issue from a miraculous work of grace which He has Himself wrought in the heart. How many there are who profess to be God's people yet only obey Him so long as they consider that their *own* interests are being served! How many are unwilling to quit trading on the Sabbath because they fear a few dollars will be lost! Now just as a traveler on foot, who takes a long journey through an unknown country, seeks a reliable guide, commits himself to his leading, trusts to his knowledge, and follows him implicitly o'er hill and dale, so God requires us to commit ourselves fully unto Him, trusting His faithfulness, wisdom and power, and yielding to every demand which He makes upon us.

"He went forth not knowing whither he went" (Heb 11:8). Most probably many of his neighbours and acquaintances in Chaldea would inquire why he was leaving them and where he was bound for. Imagine their surprise when Abraham had to say, I know not. Could *they* appreciate the fact that he was walking by faith and not by sight? Would they commend him for following divine orders? Would they not rather deem him crazy? And, dear reader, the godless will no more understand the motives which prompt the real children of God today than could the Chaldeans understand Abraham. The unregenerate

professing Christians all around us will no more approve of our strict compliance with God's commands than did Abraham's heathen neighbours. The world is governed by the senses, not faith, lives to please self, not God. And if the world does not deem you and me crazy, then there is something radically wrong with our hearts and our lives.

One other point remains to be considered and we must reluctantly conclude this article. The obedience of Abraham's faith was *unto* "a place which he should after receive for an inheritance" (Heb 11:8). Literally, that "inheritance" was Canaan—spiritually, it foreshadowed heaven. Now had Abraham refused to make the radical break which he did from his old life, crucify the affections of the flesh, and leave Chaldea, he had never reached the promised land. The Christian's "inheritance" is purely of *grace* for what can any man do in time to earn something which is eternal? Utterly impossible is it for any finite creature to perform anything which deserves an infinite reward. Nevertheless, God has marked out a certain path which conducts to the promised inheritance—the path of obedience, the "narrow way" which "leadeth *unto* life" (Mat 7:14), and only ever reach heaven who tread *that* path to the end.

As the utmost confusion now reigns upon this subject and as many are, through an unwarranted reserve, afraid to speak out plainly thereon, we feel obliged to add a little more. Unqualified obedience is required from us *not* to furnish title to heaven—that is found alone in the merits of Christ, not to fit us for heaven—that is supplied alone by the supernatural work of the Spirit in the heart, but that God may be owned and honoured by us as we journey thither, that we may prove and manifest the sufficiency of His grace, that we may furnish evidence we *are* HIS children, that we may be preserved from those things which would otherwise destroy us—only in the path of obedience can we avoid those foes which are seeking to slay us.

O dear reader, as you value your soul, we entreat you not to spurn this article and particularly its closing paragraphs, because its teaching differs radically from what you are accustomed to hear or read. The path of obedience *must* be trod if ever you are to reach heaven. Many are acquainted with that path or "way," but they walk not therein—see 2 Peter 2:20. Many, like Lot's wife, make a start along it and then turn from it—see Luke 9:62. Many follow it for quite a while, but fail to persevere and like Israel of old, perish in the wilderness. No rebel can enter heaven. One who is wrapt up in self cannot. No disobedient soul will. Only those will partake of the heavenly "inheritance" who are "the children of Abraham," who have his faith, follow his examples, perform his works. May the Lord deign to add His blessings to the above and to Him shall be all the praise.

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### *12. His Delivering of Keilah*

The first section of 1 Samuel 23 (which we are now to look at) presents some striking contrasts. In it are recorded incidents exceedingly blessed, others fearfully sad. David is

seen at his best, Saul at his worst. David humbly waits on the Lord, Saul presumes upon and seeks to pervert His providences. Saul is indifferent to the well-being of his own subjects, David delivers them from their enemies. David, at imminent risk, rescues the town of Keilah from the marauding Philistines. Yet so lacking are they in gratitude that they were ready to hand him over unto the man who sought his life. Though the priests of the Lord, with their entire families, had been brutally slain by Saul's orders, yet the awful malice of the king was not thereby appeased. He is now seen again seeking the life of David and that at the very time when he had so unselfishly wrought good for the nation.

It is instructive and helpful to keep in mind the *order* of what has been before us in previous articles, so that we may perceive one of the important spiritual lessons in what is now to be before us. David had failed, failed sadly. We all do, but David had done what many are painfully slow in doing. He had humbled himself before the Lord, he had repented of and confessed his sins. In our last paper, we saw how that David had been restored, in considerable measure at least, to communion with the Lord. God had spoken to him through His prophet. Light was now granted again on his path. The word was given him to return to the land of Judah (1Sa 22:5). That word he had heeded and now we are to see how the Lord *used* him again. Strikingly does this illustrate 1 Peter 5:6, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

"Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors" (1Sa 23:1). Here we may see another reason (more than those suggested at the close of our last article) why God had called David to return to the land of Judah. He had further work for him to do there. Keilah was within the borders of that tribe (Jos 15:21, 44). It was a fortified town (1 Sa 23:7), and the Philistines had laid siege to it. The "threshing floors" (which were usually situated outside the cities, Jdg 6:11; Ru 3:2, 15) were already being pilfered by them. Who it was that acquainted David with these tidings we know not.

"Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" (1Sa 23:2). Very blessed is this and further evidence does it supply of David's spiritual recovery. Saul was neglecting the public safety, but the one whom he was hounding was concerned for it. Though he had been ill-treated, David was not sulking over his wrongs, but instead was ready to return good for evil, by coming to the assistance of one of the king's besieged towns. What a noble spirit did he here manifest! Though his hands were full in seeking to hide from Saul and provide for the needs of his six hundred men (no small task!), yet David unselfishly thought of the welfare of others.

"Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" (1Sa 23:2). This is very beautiful. Having been anointed unto the throne, David considered himself the protector of Israel and was ready to employ his men for the public weal. He had an intense love for his country and was desirous of freeing it from its enemies, yet he would not act without first seeking counsel of the Lord. He desired that *God* should appoint his service. The more particularly we seek direction from God in fervent prayer and the more carefully we consult the sacred Scriptures for the knowledge of His will, the more He is honoured, and the more we are benefited.

"And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah" (1Sa 23:2). Where God is truly sought—that is, sought sincerely, humbly, trustfully, with the

desire to learn, and do that which is pleasing to Him—the soul will not be left in ignorance. God does not mock His needy children. His Word declares, “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he *shall* direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6). So it was here. The Lord responded to David’s inquiry—possibly through the prophet Gad—and not only revealed His will, but gave promise that he should be successful.

“And David’s men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” (1Sa 23:3). This presented a real test to David’s confidence in the Lord, for if his men were unwilling to accompany him, how could he expect to relieve the besieged town? His men were obviously “afraid” of being caught between two fires. Were they to advance upon the Philistines and Saul’s army should follow them up in the rear, then where would they be? Ah, their eyes were not upon the living God, but upon their difficult “circumstances,” and to be occupied with these is always discouraging to the heart. But how often has a man of God, when facing a trying situation, found the unbelief of his professed friends and followers a real hindrance. Yet he should regard this as a test and not as an obstacle. Instead of paralyzing action, it ought to drive him to seek succour from Him who never fails those who truly count upon His aid.

“Then David inquired of the LORD yet again” (1Sa 23:4). This is very precious. David did not allow the unbelieving fears of his men to drive him to despair. He could hardly expect them to walk by *his* faith. But he knew that when God works, He works at both ends of the line. He who had given him orders to go to the relief of Keilah, could easily quieten the hearts of his followers, remove their fears, and make them willing to follow his lead. Yes, with God “all things are possible” (Mat 19:26). But He requires to be “inquired of” (Eze 36:37). He delights to be “proved” (Mal 3:10). Oft He permits just such a trial as now faced David in order to teach us more fully His sufficiency for every emergency.

“Then David inquired of the LORD yet again” (1Sa 23:4). Yes, this is blessed indeed. David did not storm at his men and denounce them as cowards. That had done no good. Nor did he argue and attempt to reason with them. Disdaining his own wisdom, feeling his utter dependency upon God, and more especially for their benefit—to set before them a godly example—he turned once more unto Jehovah. Let us learn from this incident that the most effectual way of answering the unbelieving objections of faint-hearted followers and of securing their co-operation is to refer them unto the promises and precepts of God and set before them an example of complete dependency upon Him and of implicit confidence in Him.

“And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (1Sa 23:4). How sure is the fulfillment of that promise, “Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30)! We always lose by acting independently of God, but we never lose by seeking counsel, guidance, and grace from Him. God did not ignore David’s inquiry. He was not displeased by his asking a second time. How gracious and patient He is! He not only responded to David’s petition, but He gave an answer more explicit than at the first, for He now assured His servant of entire victory. May this encourage many a reader to come unto God with every difficulty, cast every care upon Him, and count upon His succour ever hour.

“So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah” (1Sa 23:5). Animated by a commission and promise from God, David and his men moved forward and attacked the Philistines. Not only did they completely rout the enemy, but they captured their cattle, which supplied food for David’s men, that they were probably in much need of. How this furnishes an illustration of, “Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly *above* all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20)! God not only overthrew the Philistines and delivered Keilah, but as well bountifully provided David’s army with a supply of victuals.

“And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand” (1Sa 23:6) This was a further reward from the Lord unto David for obeying His word. As we shall see later, the presence of the high priest and his ephod with him, stood David in good stead in the future. We may also see here a striking example of the absolute control of God over all His creatures. It was David’s visit to Ahimelech that had resulted in the slaying of all his family. Well then might the only son left feel that the son of Jesse was the last man whose fortunes he desired to share.

“And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars” (1Sa 23:7). Surely David’s signal victory over the common enemy should have reconciled Saul to him. Was it not abundantly clear that God was with him and if *He* were with him, who could be against him? But one who is abandoned by the Lord can neither discern spiritual things nor judge righteously and therefore his conduct will be all wrong too. Accordingly we find that instead of thinking how he might most suitably reward David for his courageous and unselfish generosity, Saul desired only to do him mischief. Well might our patriarch write, “They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul” (Psa 35:12).

“And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.” (1Sa 23:7). How easy it is for a jaundiced mind to view things in a false light. When the heart is wrong, the providences of God are certain to be misinterpreted. Terrible is it to behold the apostate king here concluding that God Himself had now sold David into his hands. That man has sunk to a fearful depth who blatantly assumes that the Almighty is working to further his wicked plan. While David was at large, hiding in caves and sheltering in the woods, he was hard to find, but here in a walled town, Saul supposed he would be completely trapped when his army surrounded it.

“And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.” (1Sa 23:8). If we omit the last clause and read on through the next verse, it will be seen that the unscrupulous Saul resorted to a dishonest ruse. To make war against the Philistines was the ostensible object which the king set before his men, to capture David was his real design. The last clause of verse 8 states Saul’s secret motive. While pretending to oppose the common enemy, he was intending to destroy his best friend. Verily, the devil was his father and the lusts of his father he would do.

“And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod” (1Sa 23:9). Yes, “The secret of the LORD is



with them that fear him" (Psa 25:14). Ah, but *only* with them that truly "fear" Him. "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not" (Joh 11:9). "He that followeth me," said Christ, "shall not walk in darkness" (Joh 8:12). O what a blessed thing it is, dear reader, to have light upon our path, to *see* the enemy's snares and pitfalls. But in order to this, there must be a walking with Him who is "the light" (Joh 8:12). If we are out of communion with the Lord, if we have for the moment turned aside from the path of His commandments, then we can no longer perceive the dangers which menace us.

"And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him" (1Sa 23:9). This is very blessed, and recorded for our instruction. We ought not to be ignorant of Satan's devices (2Co 2:11), nor shall we be if our hearts are right with God. Observe carefully that this 9th verse opens with the word, "And," which announces the fact that it is connected with and gives the sequel to what has gone before. And what *had* preceded in this case? First, David had sought counsel of the Lord (1Sa 23:2). Second, he had refused to be turned aside from the path of duty by the unbelieving fears of his followers (1Sa 23:3). Third, he had maintained an attitude of complete dependency upon the Lord (1Sa 23:4). Fourth, he had definitely obeyed the Lord (1Sa 23:5). And now God rewarded him by acquainting him with the enemy's designs upon him. Meet the conditions, my brother or sister, and you too shall know when the devil is about to attack you.

David was not deceived by Saul's guile. He knew that though he had given out to his men one thing, yet in his heart he purposed quite another. "Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, Thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake" (1Sa 23:10). This too is very blessed. Once more David turns to the living God and casts all his care upon Him (1Pe 5:7). Observe well his words. He does not say, "Saul purposeth to slay *me*," but "he seeketh to destroy *the city* for my sake," on my account. Is it not lovely to see him more solicitous about the welfare of others, than the preserving of his own life!

"Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down" (1Sa 23:11). It is to be noted that the two questions here asked by David were not orderly put, showing the perturbed state of mind he was then in. We should also observe the manner in which David addressed God, as "LORD God of Israel" (so too in 1Sa 23:10), which was His *covenant* title. It is blessed when we are able to realize the covenant-relationship of God to us (Heb 13:20-21), for it is ever an effectual plea to present before the throne of grace. The Lord graciously responded to David's supplication and granted the desired information, reversing the order of his questions. God's saying "He [Saul] will come down" (that is, his purpose), here manifested His omniscience, for He knows all contingencies (possibilities and likelihoods), as well as actualities.

"Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?" (1Sa 23:12). Wise David, he had good cause to conclude that after so nobly befriending Keilah and delivering it from the Philistines, that its citizens would now further his interests, and in such case, he and his own men could defend the town against Saul's attack. But he prudently refrained from placing any confidence in their loyalty. He probably reasoned that the recent cruel massacre of Nob would fill them with dread of

Saul, so that he must not count upon their assistance. Thus did he seek counsel from the Lord. And so ought we. We should never confide in help from others, no, not even those we have befriended and from whom we might reasonably expect a return of kindness. No ties of honour, gratitude, or affection, can secure the heart under powerful temptation. Nay, we know not how *we* would act if assailed by the terrors of a cruel death and left without the immediate support of divine grace. We are to depend *only* upon the Lord for guidance and protection.

“And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up” (1Sa 23:12). This must have been very saddening to David’s heart, for base ingratitude wounds deeply. Yet let us not forget that the kindness of other friends, whom the Lord often unexpectedly raises up, counterbalances the ingratitude and fickleness of those we have served. God answered David here according to His knowledge of the human heart. *Had* David remained in Keilah, its inhabitants would have delivered him up upon Saul’s demand. But he remained not and escaped. Be it carefully noted that this incident furnishes a clear illustration of human responsibility and is a strong case in point against bald Fatalism—taking the passive attitude that what is to be, must be.

“Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbear to go forth. And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand” (1Sa 23:13-14). This too is blessed. David was willing to expose himself and his men to further hardships, rather than endanger the lives of Keilah! Having no particular place in view, they went forth wherever they thought best. The last half of verse 14 shows God’s protecting hand was still upon them, and is Jehovah’s reply to Saul’s vain and presumptuous confidence in 1 Samuel 23:7.

## PEACE: TRUE AND FALSE

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations to God, it necessarily follows that that salvation, in all its parts, must ever be viewed from two sides—the divine and the human. God is the Saviour, a human being the one saved. In the work of salvation, God does not deal with fallen men as inanimate and irresponsible entities, but as moral and accountable agents. The power which He puts forth in the realm of grace is quite different from that which He exerts in the sphere of material creation. The one is spiritual, the other is physical. God works in us so that we are moved to will and to do of His good pleasure. Thus, by noting the effects produced through us, we are able to trace the cause wrought in us. The fruit attests the root.

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations with God, it necessarily follows that that salvation, is both an objective and a subjective thing. That is to say, it is both legal and experimental. Or, in simpler language still, it is both something which is done for us and something which is wrought in us. A salvation effected by a

vicarious satisfaction rendered to the Law, but which left the sinner unchanged personally, would be a salvation at the expense of holiness. On the other hand, a salvation which effected the requisite change in the sinner, but ignored the demands of the Law, would be a salvation at the expense of justice. Thus, justification and sanctification are inseparable.

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations to God, it necessarily follows that for peace to be adequately established, both the claims of divine justice and of divine holiness must be met and maintained. Now this is only another way of saying that the wrath of God must be appeased and also that the enmity of men must be slain. The curse of the Law must be removed and a love for the Law implanted in the human heart. The sword of divine justice must be sheathed and the sinner must be made to throw down the weapons of his rebellion against the Law-Giver. Nothing short of this could be a satisfactory peace between the Creator and the creature.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3). No indeed. Then what intercourse can there possibly be between a guilty rebel and a righteous but frowning Judge? Sin has severed the friendship which originally existed between the Creator and His creatures. As it is written, “But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them” (Isa 63:10). In consequence of this, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Joh 3:36). Note the present tense—the holy indignation of God will not only be upon the wicked in the lake of fire, but it rests upon them now. It cannot be otherwise, for “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18).

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). “Their enmity against God does not lie still, but they are exceedingly active in it. They are engaged in a war against God. Indeed they cannot hurt God, He is so much above them, but they do what they can. They oppose themselves to His honour and glory. They oppose themselves to the interests of His kingdom in this world. They oppose themselves to the will and command of God. They oppose Him in His government. While God is doing one thing, they are doing the contrary, and as much as in them lies, counter-working. God seeks one thing, they seek directly the contrary. They list under Satan’s banner and are his willing soldiers” (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758).

God has a controversy with the world and bids His sinful and rebellious creatures cease their controversy with Him. Because they will not, He frequently gives signs of His displeasure and portents of the future storm of divine judgment which shall yet burst upon the wicked and wholly engulf them. Every epidemic of disease, every severe storm on land and sea, every pestilence and famine, every earthquake and flood, is a mark of the Creator’s anger, and presages the Day of Judgment. They are divine calls for men to cease fighting against God and solemn warnings of His awful and future vengeance if they will not.

But God is not only just and righteous, but gracious and merciful. Accordingly, He has Himself laid a foundation for sinners to be at peace with Him. This is made known in the Gospel, which is designated “the Gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15). In the Gospel, an announcement is made both of what God (in His grace) has done and of what God (in His holiness) requires from sinful rebels. In that Gospel, God has made known the terms upon

which amity with Him may be obtained. But sad to say, we are living in times when the Gospel, like everything else, has been grievously perverted. When that aspect of it which is acceptable to the carnal mind has been made prominent, but when that aspect which is repellent to the flesh has been guiltily concealed. The more clearly God enables the writer to discern this, the more impelled is he to declare and expose it.

There are a great many tracts being circulated today the substance of which purports to give a conversation between an evangelist and some earnest soul who has not yet entered into the full assurance of faith. The latter is represented as "seeking to make his peace with God," whereupon the former flippantly replies, "You are two thousand years too late." The evangelist is then pictured as asking the one to whom he is speaking, to open the Bible and read Colossians 1:20—"Having made peace through the blood of His cross." Then the assertion is made, "*All* that is required from you is to believe that statement and rest upon the finished work which Christ did for you." We greatly fear that thousands of precious souls have been fatally deceived by such superficial and faulty dealings with them.

First of all, let it be duly recognised that Colossians 1:20 *was not addressed* to unsaved people, but instead to "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ" (Col 1:2). Any man who makes it his custom to take the "children's bread" and "cast it to the dogs" at once demonstrates that he is totally unqualified to deal with souls about divine and eternal matters. O how many such are now running without being sent of God! How many "novices" (1Ti 3:6) are bringing the holy truth of God into disrepute by a fleshly zeal which is not according to knowledge! Far better for "young converts" to keep their mouths closed altogether, than to open them to the dishonour of God. "Let *every* man be swift to hear, *slow to speak*" (Jam 1:19) is a much disregarded word these days of feverish activity.

In the second place, let the interested and earnest reader (who desires to please the Lord, rather than follow or be admired by men) turn to the book of Acts and see if the apostles ever preached to unsaved people anything resembling Colossians 1:20. If that important book be read through, it will be found that the message which the apostles delivered to promiscuous crowds was radically different from the "evangelistic" preaching of these degenerate days. Even to Cornelius and his household, who had reverently gathered together to hear "all things that were commanded thee of God" (Act 10:33), Peter declared, "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ: He is *Lord* of all" (Act 10:36). Peace comes to the sinner not simply by his believing on Christ as "Saviour," but first by his bowing to Him as Lord. Compare Colossians 2:6.

In the third place, to dwell exclusively on that aspect of truth, declared in Colossians 1:20, is to ignore what has been pointed out in the opening paragraphs above, especially the second and third. Colossians 1:20, like Romans 5:1 and Ephesians 2:13-16, treats only of the legal and objective side of the subject, telling of what Christ did for those who repent and believe. But is it right, is it honest, is it pleasing to God, is it helpful to perishing souls, to remain silent upon the experimental side of reconciliation and to say nothing of what God requires from rebellious men before any of them can have *applied to them* what Christ did for His people? Such men are either handling the Word of God "deceitfully" (2Co 4:2) or in great ignorance.

In the fourth place, such tracts as we now refer to and the type of teaching which they embody, betray a sad lack of acquaintance with Holy Writ. In Isaiah 27:5, we find Jehovah

Himself saying, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may *make peace with me*; and he shall make peace with me." Why that repetition, but that God, in His omniscience, foresaw the evangelistic errors of these perilous times! The same teaching is found in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus declared, "What king, going to make war with another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth *conditions of peace*. So LIKEWISE, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luk 14:31-33), which means he cannot be a Christian—see Matthew 28:19, Acts 11:26.

"The way of peace have they not known" (Rom 3:17), not "known" in a practical way—neither approved nor trodden it. The primary reference here is to an experimental ignorance of that way in which men must walk so as to further the good of their neighbors, for "peace" makes for concord and friendship. It is man's ferocity which has filled the world with animosities, murders, rebellions, and wars. It has been truly said, "The most savage animals do not destroy so many of their own species to appease their hunger, as man destroys his fellows to satiate his ambition, his revenge, or cupidity" (Robert Haldane, 1764-1842).

Yet though the primary reference be unto man's relations unto his fellows, these words, "the way of peace have they not known" (Rom 3:17), may well be given a higher application. The way *of* peace is the way that leads *to* peace. There are many who have an intellectual acquaintance with the *ground* of peace with God (namely the perfect satisfaction which Christ made unto divine law and justice), but it is greatly to be feared that the vast majority of them are total strangers experimentally to *the way of* peace. How few today even perceive that there *must be* a zealous renunciation of all those things which have furthered estrangement between God and men. How few today recognize the imperative necessity for casting away the weapons of rebellion against God, the bewailing of our high-handed crimes against Him, and the complete surrender of ourselves to His Lordship.

"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa 57:21) and there never will be until they *make their peace with* their offended Maker. By "making our peace" with God, we *do not* mean the performing any works of merit or doing something which entitles us to His favour. No indeed. *That* is utterly impossible. Instead, we mean that the sinner must heed the terms of such a verse as, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return [having, in Adam, departed] unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). God certainly will not pardon our sins while we deliberately remain in them.

By "making our peace with God" is meant that the rebel against God's holy Law *must truly repent* and until this is done all the "believing" in the world is useless and worthless. Genuine repentance is a heart anguish for having despised and flouted the authority of the all-excellent God. It is a ceasing to be at enmity against God and a becoming at enmity against sin. There cannot be peace with God while we are at peace with sin! We must, by divine grace, be resolved to war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, which constitute the trinity of evil—the arch-enemies of the Blessed Trinity. Peace is the unity and concord

of men with God and it is a contradiction in terms to speak of being at peace with Him if I am still striving against Him.

But there are some superficial people who (to their great loss, despise the study of "theology") imagine that what has been said above sullies the glory of Christ and detracts from the efficacy of His "finished work." As well might they argue that His present intercession on High does so. What do these people suppose Christ came here to effect? To be the Condoner of sin? To render God less holy? To give a reprieve for the lusts of the flesh? To grant an indulgence for carnal walking? Far, far different was the case. He came here to magnify the Law and make it honourable (Isa 42:21), to procure the Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify His people (Gal 3:13-14), to leave them an example that they should follow His steps (1Pe 2:21). Christ died not to reconcile God to our sins, but to bring us into the service, love, and enjoyment of God. True, *our* repentance and reformation would have been useless had not Christ lived and died, yet His atoning sacrifice avails no man who does not repent and surrender to His Lordship. Christ is most honoured when His servants teach that He died to save His people *from* their sins and by His Spirit's work, enable them to live holy lives in this present evil world.

"And you, that *were* [not "are"! ] sometime alienated and enemies [to God] in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col 1:21). How? By His Spirit overcoming their enmity, changing their hearts, turning them unto God. True, our reconciliation to God is no *cause* of God's reconciliation to us, yet according to the method which He has settled upon as being most agreeable to His glorious being, to His pure holiness, His hatred of sin, the justice of His government, and the truth of His Word, we cannot say He *is* actually reconciled to us, till we are to Him. We must learn to distinguish between reconciliation purposed by the Father, purchased by Christ, applied by the Spirit, and appropriated by us through repentance and faith.

"When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (1Th 5:3). Those words have something more than a "dispensational" reference. They have a practical application. There are many ill-informed "evangelists" and "personal workers" who *are saying*, "Peace and safety" to those who give a bare assent to John 3:16, but "sudden destruction" shall yet come both on themselves and on their poor benighted victims. O my reader, as you value your soul, examine well the "peace" which you fancy *you* are enjoying. Has it brought to an end your rebellion against *God's Law*, your resistance to the motions of His Spirit, your love of the world, your living to please self? If not, it is a *false* peace. Throw down the weapons of your wicked warfare against God. "Make peace" with Him ere His fury cast you into hell.

"Take care, my dear friend, to clear away as far as possible everything that would *hinder* your believing. Now you may depend upon it that going into sin hinders believing. You cannot continue in willful sin and yet become a believer. Sin cherished in the heart is an effectual hindrance. A man cannot be tied to a post and yet run away at the same time. If you bind yourself to your sin, you cannot escape. Withdraw at once from evil company—it is very deadly mischief to young seekers. You hear an impressive sermon, but then you go away talking with idle gossips, and you fall into frivolous chit-chat on the Sabbath afternoon. You cannot expect your soul to grow in the right direction under such influences. Get you to your knees, get you to solitude, get you to your God, get you to

Jesus Christ. This it is that will roll away the stone which blocks the door” (C. H. Spurgeon from sermon on John 6:24, 1834-1892).

## ASSURANCE

### *5. Its Hindrances*

“*Question:* Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in the estate of grace and that they shall be saved? *Answer:* Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith (2Pe 1:10), true believers may wait long before they obtain it (1Jo 5:13), and after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted, through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions (Psa 77:7-9; 31:22, etc.). Yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God, as keeps them from sinking into utter despair (Psa 73:13-15, 23; 1Jo 3:9; Isa 54:7-11, Westminster Catechism).

Just as the absence or the loss of bodily health is not always attributable to the same cause or occasion, neither is the absence or diminution of assurance always to be accounted for in the same way. And just as any doctor who used only one medicine for the healing of all diseases would exhibit his crass incompetence, so any “Christian worker” who prescribes the same treatment to all soul-diseases at once declares himself a physician “of no value” (Job 13:4). There are *degrees* of health, both of body and soul, and this is to be ascribed, in the first place, to the high sovereignty of God, who distributes His gifts, both natural and spiritual, as He pleases. Yet, while we cannot impart health to ourselves, we should use legitimate means which, under God’s blessing, are conducive thereto. So too we may, through our sinful folly, undermine and destroy our health. The same holds good in the spiritual realm.

In many cases, lack of Christian assurance, or a very low degree thereof, is due to a *poor state of health*. Bodily infirmities re-act on the mind. Low physical vitality is usually accompanied by lowness of spirits. A sluggish liver produces depression and despondency. Many a person whose soul is now “cast down” would be greatly benefited by more open air exercise, a change of diet, and a few doses of castor oil. Yet we are far from saying that this course would result in the recovery or increase of assurance, for spiritual effects cannot be produced by material agents. Nevertheless, the removal of a physical hindrance is often an aid. Who can read the Word to profit while suffering from a nerve-racking headache! What we wish to make clear is that, in some instances at least, what is regarded as a lack of assurance is nothing more than physical inability to enjoy the things of God. Nor do we mean by this that none are blest with the joy of the Lord while their bodily health is at a low ebb. Not so. There are striking cases which show the contrary. But it still remains that many are missing much spiritual good through their disregarding the elementary laws of physical well-being.

The assurance of some of God's dear children has been hindered by a *defective ministry*. They have sat under teaching which was too one-sided, failing to preserve a due balance between the objective and the subjective aspects of the truth. They have been encouraged to be far more occupied with self than with Christ. Knowing that many are deceived, fearful lest they also should be, their main efforts are directed to self-examination. Disgusted too by the loud boastings of empty professors, perceiving the worthlessness of the carnal confidence voiced by the frothy religionists all around them, they hesitate to avow the assurance of salvation lest they be guilty of presumption or be puffed up by the devil. Yea, they have come to regard doubtings, fears, and uncertainty as the best evidence of spiritual humility.

Now while we are by no means prepared to sanction the idea last named, yet we have no hesitation whatever in saying that we much prefer it to the presumptuous claims now being made by so many. Far rather would we cast in our lot with a company of lowly, pensive, self-distrustful people, who exclaim, "'Tis a point I long to know, Oft it causes anxious thought, Do I love the Lord or no, Am I His, or am I not?" than fraternize with those who never have a doubt of their acceptance in Christ, but who are self-complacent and haughty, and whose daily walk compares most unfavorably with the former. Better far to be weighed down by a sense of my vileness and go mourning all my days over lack of conformity to Christ, than remain ignorant of my real state and go about light-hearted and light-headed, wearing a smile all the time.

But surely there is a happy medium between spending most of my days in Doubting Castle and the Slough of Despond so that I am virtually a stranger to "the joy of the Lord," and experiencing a false peace from Satan which is never disturbed by the voice of conscience. Holy assurance and lowly-heartedness are not incompatible. The same apostle who cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24), also declared, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him" (2Ti 1:12). "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2Co 6:10) summed up his dual experiences. We too are "sorrowful" daily if God has opened our eyes to see something of the mass of corruption which still indwells us. "Sorrowful" too when we perceive how far, far short we come of the example which Christ has left us. Yet we also "rejoice" because God has not left us in ignorance of our dreadful state, that He has planted within us deep yearnings after holiness, and because we know these yearnings will be fully realized when we are freed from this body of death.

The assurance of other saints is greatly dampened by *the assaults of Satan*. There are three principal things which our great enemy seeks to accomplish—incite us to sin, hinder the exercise of our graces, and destroy our peace and joy. If he fails largely in the first two, he is often very successful in the third. Posing as an angel of light, he comes to the soul preaching the holiness of God and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, his object being to overwhelm the conscience and drive to despair. He presses upon the Christian the awfulness and prevalence of his unbelief, the coldness of his heart toward God, and the many respects in which his deportment and actions are unchristlike. He reminds him of numerous sins, both of omission and commission, and the more tender be his conscience, the more poignant are Satan's thrusts. He challenges him to compare *his* character with



that given of the saints in Scripture and then tells him his profession is worthless, that he is a hypocrite, and that it is mockery to take the holy name of Christ upon his polluted lips.

So many succumb to Satan's efforts to disturb their peace and destroy their assurance through not knowing how to meet his attacks and through forgetting that Scripture is very far from representing the earthly lives of God's children as flawless and perfect. As a general rule, it is the best thing to *acknowledge the truth* of Satan's charges when he declares that I am still a great sinner in myself. When he asks me if such and such a lusting of the flesh be consistent with a heart in which a miracle of divine grace has been wrought? I should answer, Yes, for the "flesh" in me has neither been eradicated nor refined. When he asks, How can such doubtings consist with a heart to which God has communicated saving faith? remind him how Scripture tells us of one who came to Christ saying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24).

But the commonest hindrance to assurance is *the indulgence of some known sin*. When a Christian deliberately follows some course which God's Word forbids, when he lives in some unwarranted practice, and God has often touched him for it, and his conscience has been sorely pricked, and yet he perseveres in the same—then no wonder if he be destitute of assurance and the comfort of the Spirit. The cherishing of sin necessarily obscures *the evidences* of divine sonship, for it so abates the degree of our graces as to make them indiscernible. Allowed sin dims the eye of the soul so that it cannot see its own state and stupefies the heart so that it cannot feel its own condition. But more—it provokes God so that He withdraws from us the benevolent light of His countenance, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa 59:2).

The sad history of David presents a solemn case in point. His fearful fall brought with it painful consequences, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Psa 32:3-4). But blessed be God, his earthly life did not end while he was in this lamentable state, "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psa 32:5). Further light on the deep exercises of soul through which David passed is given us in Psalm 51. There we hear him crying, "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy Salvation" (Psa 51:9-12). This leads us to consider,

#### 6. *Its Maintenance.*

Here again there are two extremes to be guarded against—the Fatalistic lethargy of I cannot help myself and the Arminian effrontery which affirms that the remedy lies in my own hands. Spiritual assurance is a divine gift, nevertheless, the Christian has a responsibility for preserving the same. It is true that I cannot speak peace to my own conscience or apply the balm of Gilead to my wounded heart, yet I can do many things to grieve and repel the great Physician. We cannot bring ourselves near to God, but we can and do wander from Him. Of ourselves we cannot live to God's glory, but we can to our own. Of ourselves we cannot walk after the Spirit, but we can after the flesh. We cannot make ourselves fruitful unto every good word and work, but we may by disobedience and

self-indulgence bring leanness into our souls and coldness into our affections. We cannot impart health to our bodies, but we can use *means* which, by God's blessing, further the same.

1. Holy assurance cannot be maintained unless the Christian keeps his heart with "all diligence" (Pro 4:23). "Watch ye and pray, *lest* ye enter into temptation" (Mar 14:38). "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb 3:12). There must be, "A watchful fighting and contending against the whole work of sin, in its deceits and power, with all the contribution of advantage and efficacy that it hath from Satan and the world. This the apostle peculiarly applies it unto, in the cautions and exhortations given us, to take heed of it, that we be not hardened by it; seeing its whole design is to impair or destroy our interest and persistency in Christ, and so to draw us off from the living God" (John Owen).

More especially does the Christian need to pray and strive against *presumptuous* sins. Right hands must be cut off, right eyes plucked out (Mat 5:29), a gangrened member must be amputated, or death will soon ensue. Cry mightily unto God for enabling grace to mortify besetting sins. Remember that a deliberate running into the place of danger, a willful exposing of myself to sin's attacks, is a tempting of the Lord. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Pro 4:14-15). O what circumspect walking is called for in a world which abounds with pitfalls on every side!

2. Holy assurance cannot be maintained unless the Christian be diligent in *cherishing his graces*. A Christian is one who has been made a partaker of those spiritual graces which "accompany salvation" (Heb 6:9), and for the establishing of his comfort and joy it is necessary that he *know* himself to be in possession of them. The best evidence that we *are* in a state of grace is to *grow in grace*. For this there needs to be a "daily constant cherishing and labouring to improve and strengthen every grace by which we abide in Christ. Neglected grace will wither and be ready to die (Rev 3:2), yea, as to some degrees of it, and as to its work in evidencing the love of God unto us or our union with Christ, it will utterly decay. Some of the churches in the Revelation had lost their first love, as well as left their first works. Hence is that command that we should grow in grace and we do so when grace grows and thrives in us. And this is done two ways:

"First, when any individual grace is improved. When that faith which was weak, becomes strong and that love which was faint and cold, becomes fervent and is inflamed, which is not to be done but in and by the sedulous exercise of these graces themselves, and a constant application of our souls by them to the Lord Christ. Secondly, by adding one grace unto another, 'And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; to virtue knowledge,' etc. (2Pe 1:5). This is the proper work of spiritual diligence. This is the nature of Gospel-graces, because of their concatenation in Christ and as they are wrought in us by one and the self-same Spirit, the exercise of one leads us to the stirring up and bringing in the exercise of another into the soul" (John Owen).

3. By *keeping short accounts with God*. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22). Note the intimate connection there is between these things. There cannot be a sincere and hearty approach unto God as worshipers while the

guilt of sin be resting upon our consciences. Nothing more effectually curtails our freedom in drawing nigh to the thrice Holy One than the painful realization that my conduct has been displeasing to Him. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1Jo 3:21).

But strive as he may, walk as cautiously and carefully as he will, in "many things" the Christian "offends" (Jam 3:2) daily, both by sins of omission and commission. Yet, blessed be God, provision has been made by our loving Father even for this sad failure of ours. "If we *confess* our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jo 1:9). As soon as we are conscious of having done wrong, we should unbosom ourselves to God, holding nothing back, but freely acknowledge each offence. Nor should we fear to do this frequently, daily, yea constantly. If the Lord bids us to forgive our sinning brethren "until seventy times seven" (Mat 18:22), is He less merciful! "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them [in heart and purpose] shall have mercy" (Pro 28:13).

4. By *cultivating daily communion with God*. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1Jo 1:3-4). Observe the connection between these two statements—fullness of joy (which in this epistle largely has reference to walking in the unclouded assurance of our divine sonship) is the fruit of fellowship with the Father and His Son. But what is signified by the term "fellowship"? Many seem to have but vague and visionary ideas of its meaning. Oneness of heart and mind, common interests and delights, unity of will and purpose, reciprocal love, is what is denoted. It is a fellowship "in the light" (1Jo 1:5, 7). This was perfectly realized and exemplified by the Lord Jesus. He walked in uninterrupted communion with the Father, delighting in His will (Psa 40:8), keeping His commandments (Joh 14:31), always doing those things which were pleasing in His sight (Joh 8:29). And this very epistle declares, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1Jo 2:6). What a standard is here set before us! Yet after it we should prayerfully and constantly strive.

Fellowship is *participation* in the light and love of God. It is a refusing of the things He hates and a choosing of the things in which He delights. It is the losing of my will in His. It is a going out of self and an embracing of God in Christ. It is the acceptance of His estimate of things, thinking His thoughts after Him, viewing the world and all in it, life both present and future, from His viewpoint. It is therefore a being moulded into conformity with His holy nature. It is living to His glory. And thus it is a fellowship of *joy* and "the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh 8:10)—strength to overcome temptations, to perform the duties of life, to endure its sorrows and disappointments. The closer we walk with the Lord, the brighter will be the evidences of our divine sonship.

#### 7. *Its Fruits.*

Holy assurance delivers from those doubts and fears, which rob many a Christian of his legitimate joy in the Lord. This is clear from the contrast presented in Romans 8:15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." Suspense is bad enough in any of our concerns, but most of all in connection with our eternal interests. But true assurance sets us free from the painful bondage of uncertainty and even robs death of its terrors. It enables the soul to

say, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in *my* God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation" (Isa 61:10).

Holy assurance produces patience in tribulation, "And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, *knowing in yourselves* that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb 10:34). Where the heart is anchored in God, basking in the sunshine of His countenance, the Christian will not be afraid of evil tidings, remains calm under bereavements, is unmoved by persecutions. "When I live in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks that I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all tribulation: no afflictions daunt me. But when I am eclipsed in my comfort, I am of so fearful a spirit that I can run into a very mouse-hole" (Ridley, 1551).

Holy assurance results in a joy in God which causes its possessor to despise those evil pleasures after which the worldling so much dotes. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab 3:17-18). "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure...*for* so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly [both now and in the future] into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:10-11).

## SELF-JUDGMENT

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"—1 Corinthians 11:31-32.

"*For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*" (1Co 11:31). Here we perceive a judgment to which the saints, and only the saints, are amenable—a judgment belonging solely to this life, exercised by Christ, who is the Judge. To Him the church is accountable, every believer is responsible to Him for his thoughts, words, and works. Nothing escapes His notice. He walks "in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev 1:13), "His eyes are as a flame of fire" (Rev 1:13), "Before Him all things are naked and opened," (See Heb 4:13) and He can still say to each and all, "I know thy works" (Rev 3:15), *This* tribunal is always set. The books are always open. From it, no believer can altogether escape. Not that the Lord is strict to mark iniquity or righteous to punish, if He were, "O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa 130:3) The Lord Jesus has no haste to correct His children. He says, He does it not from his heart. And indeed, the words above contain most gracious assurance of deliverance from correction, even though they have offended. They seem to say, indeed, that the Lord is slow to chasten, though His children be so faulty. His love for them is such that not only shall they be delivered from all penal inflictions for sin (for these He has fully borne for them), but He would also show them *how to avoid His corrections*. There is something, therefore, exceedingly gracious in this notice given to the church, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1Co 11:31), tending to

confirm our confidence in our Lord and in His amazing condescension and tenderness. The believer knows he must trust in Jesus implicitly and confide in Him entirely. When the storm and tempest rage the most furiously, he may run into his hiding-place and find sweet repose from the world, the flesh, and the devil, for "the name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe" (Pro 18:10).

Now if ever there was a time when this confidence could be shaken, it would be when the saint had sinned, but even then he may, and must, rest his soul in Jesus. Some of the Lord's children, when overtaken in a fault, immediately expect correction at His hands and through all of it walk heavily, but the passage also meets their case. It is a law of our great High Priest, and also our Judge, that, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1Co 11:31). That is, if we note when we have offended, and go directly to the Judge condemning ourselves and confessing it to Him, He will pardon and pass it by. Wonderful condescension! He will allow the believer to be his own judge. What a proof that the Spirit is within him, yea, Christ Himself, the Hope of Glory! Having judged himself and brought in the verdict of guilty, the believer will feel the paramount necessity of getting the blood sprinkled afresh upon him and of turning out of the wrong path, and he is thus brought to the point, only more readily and speedily, to which chastening would have brought him. It is, if one might so speak, a nearer and easier way back into the right path, for the Lord only wishes us to walk with him, enjoying His presence and His smiles, and when we turn aside through frailty, the sooner we come back the better. It is not He who would keep us at a distance. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1Jo 1:9).

But alas! many walk so carelessly, "at all adventures with God" (Matthew Henry on Jer 34:8-11, 1662-1714) that they offend and are not aware of it. They are out of the way and know it not. They are plainly, therefore, not in a capacity to judge themselves, and as sin must not be on the believer unknown and unconfessed, the good Lord will go after the careless one and bring him into judgment. He will judge him, since he would not judge himself. But (if such an expression might be used) He would much rather His people should judge themselves. He would have them live so that He might always be present with them and they might have their Lord continually, if, as soon as they sinned, they detected it and acknowledged it, then they would cease to be guilty, and walking thus in the light as He is in the light, the fellowship should not be broken, for the blood should "cleanse from all sin" (1Jo 1:7). The believer, thus cleansed and restored to obedience, *escapes the chastening*, for the end of the chastening is amendment, and if he has arrived at the latter, what need is there for the former? And O how like is this to our Lord! and how kind of Him to make it so plain to us! Should we not at least learn thus much from the words,—if He is so graciously desirous not to chasten, how very careful should be our walk with Him!

Now this was not the case with these Corinthians. They sinned again and again and seemed to take no account of it. They were carnal. There was among them envying and strife and division, still they judged not themselves. The Lord, who is slow to anger, waited long, and they only went further and further astray, till at last, in the abuse of His supper, He was compelled to be the Judge. Perhaps Peter's was a case like the former. He judged himself. His bitter tears told of his guilt and his sorrow and not a word of upbraiding does

he hear. The very angels have a special message for him, "Tell his disciples and Peter, that he is risen" (See Mat 28:7) etc. And our Lord was "seen of Cephas, then of the twelve" (1Co 15:12). "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon" (Luk 24:34).

Note the words *guilt* and *guilty*, in the above, have nothing whatever to do with the believer's state before God, for in Christ he is as free from the imputation of sin as the risen Surety. But if the washed one offend in neglecting to wash his feet, he will bring the sense of guilt into his conscience, which may be so strong as to make him forget he has been purged from his old sins. The Lord vouchsafe us tender consciences and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, to which we are elected.

*"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"* (1Co 11:32). *"When we are judged of the Lord we are chastened."* He does not always tell us our fault first. We are so selfish and unwilling to suffer that we are willing then to search ourselves and we see wherefore this evil is upon us. Having sinned and failed to confess, we are laid open to His displeasure, to escape then is hopeless. O the bitterness of provoking Him to punish us, our best Friend. That One who poured out His life's blood for us, who endured the sharpest inflictions of justice to screen us, Him whose heart is love, and on the sense of whose love all our happiness depends! Yet, we forfeit all and compel Him to restrain His lovely smile, put on instead a frown, take the rod in His hand, and chasten us for our folly. Then we cannot escape. Smite He will. How long and how much, we must leave to Him. We are completely in His hands. His power over us is supreme, entire. Resistance is vain and will certainly increase the affliction. There is nothing to be done, but humbly to lie down before Him and submit to His will. He may punish severely, often He does. He may punish long and there is no promise that it shall not be so. The suffering child has but one resource, but one door of hope. It is love, the exquisite, surpassing love of Him who is chastening. On that he throws himself, as Francis Quarles (1592-1644) says, "I turn from Lord to Jesus; From Thyself to Thee."

Yes, there is none other. He who inflicts the pain can withdraw His hand. He who has wounded, can bind up. He who has laid us in the dust by His frown, can raise up by His smile. Yes, He can forgive, He can restore, He can heal. "He will not always chide" (Psa 103:9). He will "turn again," perhaps meaning He will relent, as the parent when he has punished the child, never is his heart so soft as then. So our Jesus, "Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD" (Jer 31:20). This, this is a mercy, an infinite mercy, that we are in the hands of One so tender, so loving, who does not like to put us to pain, who does it unwillingly, and longs to restore us to favour. But there is still a greater mercy in the reason assigned for correction. It is "that we should not be condemned with the world" (1Co 11:32). Ah, it is enough to make one tremble to think of the ungodly, who never having been chastened here, will hereafter bear the full punishment of all their offences. But it is not so with us, thanks be to God, we are judged here, not there—in this world, not in the next. And it is because we shall be acquitted hereafter that Christ our Lord must of necessity notice our offences here, "You only have I known" (Amo 3:2), etc. The wicked go free, their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them, for this reason, their reckoning is future, ours is present. Let us bless the Lord for His kind

care of us and for not suffering us to take our own way. Let us not rebel against His loving discipline, but thank Him for being so particular with us (2Co 10:18), seeing that His dealing points to our high destiny and issues in our everlasting blessedness, to the praise of the glory of His grace.—A Servant of the Church, 1855.

## OUR ANNUAL LETTER

To our dear brethren and sisters in Christ. Greetings in the worthy and blessed name of Him who “hath done all things well” (Mar 7:37). It is of Him we desire to speak, His goodness and mercy we wish to extol. True, He is pleased to use intermediary agents and employ human instruments in the carrying out of His purpose of grace and in the bestowing of His blessings, yet it is *Himself* who is the prime-mover, the fountain-head of every good and perfect gift which we receive. Only as this is kept steadily in view are we preserved from idolizing the creature and being unduly occupied with secondary causes. Only as we look behind and above every human kindness and trace all to Him who moved their hearts to show that kindness unto us, are our hearts engaged with Him who is fairer than the children of men, and are we ready to ascribe unto Him the praise and thanksgiving which are His due.

Once more the time has come for us to record something of the Lord’s tender dealings with us throughout another year and these words, “*He* hath done *all* things well” (Mar 7:37) seem best suited to express our present thoughts and feelings. O that it may please our God and Father to ever grant us grace to think and feel this when no matter what form His providential dispensations may take. May His Holy Spirit so subdue the sin, which still indwells us, that we may be preserved from murmuring or calling into question any of His dealings with us. Should His chastening hand fall upon us, that too will be “well,” for it will evidence His love giving needful correction and discipline. Should grievous afflictions become our portion, that too will be “well,” for by such things He teaches His children the sinfulness of sin, the vanity of the world, and the weaning-power of His grace.

Perhaps such things as we have just named above seem out of place in a letter which is about to record the Lord’s abounding gifts and favours. But the Word of truth bids us to “Rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11). Each separate state of soul has its own peculiar temptation and danger, as it is but a short step from sorrow to despair, so unless we are much upon our guard, it is easy to turn from rejoicing to self-complacency. O may God in His mercy remove pride far from us and cause us to make our boast in Himself alone. In the midst of blessings which God showers upon us, we may well “tremble,” tremble lest our hearts cherish the spirit of self-righteousness and indulge the awful thought that it is because of our own goodness such bounties are now our portion. Rather may the Lord keep us in such a state of soul that we may ever feelingly say, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shown unto thy servant” (Gen 32:10).

For another year the editor and his wife have been spared a single day's sickness. What mercy is this! Though the editor spends at least twelve hours every day in his study, engaged in heavy mental work, yet this close confinement, year after year, has not impaired his health to the slightest degree. Though he has now read through the Bible over fifty times and upwards of one million pages of theological literature, he has no glasses and reads the finest print as comfortably as he did twenty-five years ago. Though the editor's wife does all her own housework (and we have no electricity), making of bread, and her own clothes, looks after a garden, and has canned and preserved, jellied and pickled between two hundred and fifty and three hundred pints of fruits and vegetables, and though she does all the typing and addressing of envelopes for this magazine, yet in spite of a frail body, God has graciously sustained and granted all needed strength.

For another year we have been spared all anxiety. Notwithstanding the financial straitness of the business world, the Lord has sent in funds just as freely as ever. No appeals have been made, no one has been asked to contribute a cent, yet we close this year with a larger credit-balance than any one of the preceding years—D.V. we hope to give details in the next issue. This is the more striking in view of the fact that our circulation has decreased quite a little. But God is not dependent upon numbers. Quite a number of our old friends have been taken to heaven during the past two years, but God has touched the hearts of others to fill their places. Not only has He enabled us to pay every bill within twenty-four hours of its receipt, but He has graciously ministered freely to our personal needs. During the year, we have received less than 25 dollars (five pounds) for the little oral ministry we have engaged in and have not used for ourselves a single cent which has been sent in for the magazine. Yet our every personal need has been fully met and we have been able to send more money to the Lord's poor during 1932 than any previous year. Hallelujah!

For another year the Spirit has most graciously and freely supplied "Seed to the sower" (2Co 9:10). The class of readers for whom we write is exceedingly varied and much wisdom and definite guidance is needed to suit the messages unto them. Babes in Christ, capable of taking in only the milk of the Word, young men and fathers better able to digest the strong meat, many preachers anxious for suggestions for sermons, souls in deep trouble needing comfort. Only He who is acquainted with all the circumstances and details of every life can guide us to give a "word in season" to such varied cases. Much of what we have been led to write this year has been of a solemn and searching character and we would earnestly urge our readers to re-read, particularly the articles on "Saving Faith" and "Assurance." If we are spared, we hope to continue writing other articles of a similar nature.

For another year God has been pleased to grant many seals to our labours. He has condescended to use this little magazine as a channel of help to not a few of His scattered people. Many are the letters to hand from all parts of the earth, testifying to the blessing received under God from its pages. Hardly a day passes but we receive some word of encouragement. What rejoices us even more is the fact that the Lord is raising up an increasing number of prayer-helpers (2Co 1:11). Only that Day will show how much we owe to the daily supplications of those who have the ear of God. We earnestly covet the continued intercession of fellow-saints, that we may be preserved from all error and guided



into the “present truth” (2Pe 1:12), and that God will be pleased to use this paper to a yet greater number of His needy people.

Having owned above the goodness of our God in so faithfully supplying all our need through another year, it is only right and meet that we should heartily thank the many brethren and sisters in Christ who have sent in their gifts and love-offerings. Numbers of these have been very touching. One sister sent a tithe of the first money earned in three years. Several have, out of “their deep poverty” (2Co 8:2), given their mite and with such offerings God is well pleased. Others have, we fear through pride, refrained from sending in a few cents because unable to give more. But a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple is owned by Christ! We also take this opportunity for thanking Mr. Ardill of Australia for his kindly interest and Mr. Winstone of England (who is a busy business man) for all the kind trouble he has gone to on our behalf.

Quite a few names for the magazine have been received during the year. Following our usual custom, those from whom we have heard nothing will be dropped from our list, as also others who seem to feel that they are entitled to receive these “Studies” indefinitely, merely because they are “free.” We dare not use the gifts of those who have *denied themselves* to continue sending this magazine to those who deem it neither a privilege nor a duty to help maintain it. When we know that a reader wishes to, but is unable to send in even a small gift and is being helped by our articles, their name is gladly retained. If *you* do not receive the magazine, next year this paragraph will explain why—unless you have failed to notify us of change of address. Will friends please note that though your Post Office will forward letters to a new address, *they will not magazines*.

The dropping of several hundred names from our list at the end of the year is an unpleasant task, we assure you, yet it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful (1Co 4:2) and we dare not waste copies on uninterested ones or on those who would take an unfair advantage of the generosity of others. The mere fact that this magazine is sent forth without any charge to the recipient, does not mean that anybody and everybody is “free to help themselves.” If a reader has, under God, really been profited spiritually, then we believe that person feels it both a privilege and a responsibility to contribute to the financial support of the magazine and that without being asked to do so. If they do not feel thus, then, most probably, the magazine is wasted on them. True, some may be genuinely unable (at the present time) to send in a gift, but surely they can send a post card to say so and ask us to accept the will for the deed.

The dropping of so many names means that new ones are required to fill their places if we are to have sufficient on our list to justify the continued publication of this monthly messenger. And the right kind are not easy to obtain. By the “right kind” we mean those who are likely to really read and value these “Studies in the Scriptures”—the vast majority of professing Christians today have far more relish for a religious novel or sensational “signs of the times” and current news items. We wish that many of our friends who are interested, would give us permission to send them a second or third copy of each issue for 1933, for them to pass out to those likely to have an appetite for spiritual food. In this way we might reach a few more of God’s hungry sheep. In any case, please pray daily that God will bring us into touch with more of His own and graciously prepare their hearts for the messages.

We are having a number of sets of the twelve issues for 1932 neatly and strongly bound, for those desiring them for permanent use and reference. These we expect to be able to supply very shortly at (—4/2) post paid—practically at cost price. Our stock of back volumes is getting very low, but we can still supply a few from 1928 and onwards. These contain our verse by verse exposition of Hebrews from the beginning. They will soon be out of print! Friends in Australia and Great Britain, please continue remitting to Mr. Winstone till further notice. If a small gift, send to us in English three half-penny stamps or Australian one or two penny stamps. We can use a few of them. Will new readers kindly pardon the *personal* touches in this letter, but many of the older readers are intimate and personal friends. And now commending you all to God and the Word of His grace, Yours by His abounding mercy, A.W. and V.E. Pink.

