

A lit candle, a magnifying glass over an open book, and a quill pen. The candle is lit, casting a warm glow. The magnifying glass is positioned over the open book, which is filled with text. The quill pen lies on the right page of the book.

Annual Volume

1933

STUDIES IN THE  
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK (1886-1952)

# Studies in the Scriptures

*Annual Volume 1933*

Vol. XII

by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

## Contents

### January

The Holy Spirit.....	7
<i>1. Introduction</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	9
<i>61. The Life of Abraham (11:9-10)</i>	
The Life of David.....	15
<i>13. His Sojourn at Ziph</i>	
Coming to Christ.....	19
<i>Part 1</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	24
<i>1. The Promises of God</i>	
Letter to a Deeply Exercised Soul.....	28
Assurance .....	31
<i>Dialogue 1</i>	

### February

The Holy Spirit.....	36
<i>2. The Personality of the Holy Spirit</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	38
<i>62. The Faith of Sarah (11:11-12)</i>	
The Life of David.....	45
<i>14. His Sparing of Saul</i>	
Coming to Christ.....	49

<i>Part 2</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	54
<i>1. The Promises of God (Concluded)</i>	
Faith .....	58
Assurance .....	60
<i>Dialogue 2</i>	
Good News .....	64
March	
The Holy Spirit .....	65
<i>3. The Deity of the Holy Spirit</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	67
<i>63. The Perseverance of Faith (11:13-14)</i>	
The Life of David .....	74
<i>15. His Address to Saul</i>	
Coming to Christ .....	78
<i>Part 3</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	82
<i>2. The Purpose of God</i>	
Christian Perfection .....	86
<i>Part 1</i>	
Sound the Alarm .....	91
April	
The Holy Spirit .....	94
<i>4. The Titles of the Holy Spirit</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	96
<i>64. The Reward of Faith (11:15-16)</i>	
The Life of David .....	102
<i>16. His Victory over Saul</i>	
Coming to Christ .....	106
<i>Part 4</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	112
<i>2. The Purpose of God (Continued)</i>	
Christian Perfection .....	116
<i>Part 2</i>	
Trusting God .....	119
Not Ashamed .....	122

## May

The Holy Spirit.....	124
<i>5. The Covenant Offices of the Holy Spirit</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	126
<i>65. The Faith of Abraham (11:17-19)</i>	
The Life of David.....	132
<i>17. His Affront from Nabal</i>	
Assurance .....	136
<i>Dialogue 3</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	140
<i>2. The Purpose of God (Concluded)</i>	
Waiting at Wisdom's Gates .....	144
Deliverance from Prison .....	149

## June

The Holy Spirit.....	153
<i>6. The Holy Spirit during Old Testament Ages</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	155
<i>66. The Faith of Abraham, Concluded (11:17-19)</i>	
The Life of David.....	161
<i>18. His Check from Abigail</i>	
Waiting at Wisdom's Gates .....	165
<i>Part Two</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	169
<i>2. The Purpose of God (Summarized)</i>	
Lord and Savior.....	173
Bitters and Sweets .....	178
Spiritual Helplessness .....	180

## July

The Holy Spirit.....	182
<i>8. The Holy Spirit and Christ: Part Two</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	184
<i>68. The Faith of Jacob (11:21)</i>	
The Life of David.....	190
<i>20. His Chastening</i>	
Heart Work.....	194
<i>Part Two</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	198

3. <i>The Church of God</i>	
The Christian's Armour—Part 2 .....	203
<i>(Part 1 in August Issue)</i>	
<i>Ephesians 6:10-18</i>	
Furnace Conduct .....	208
August	
The Holy Spirit.....	212
7. <i>The Holy Spirit and Christ: Part One</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	214
67. <i>The Faith of Isaac (11:20)</i>	
The Life of David.....	220
19. <i>His Marriage to Abigail</i>	
Heart Work.....	224
<i>Part One</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	228
3. <i>The Church of God (Concluded)</i>	
The Christian's Armour—Part 1 .....	232
<i>(Part 2 in July Issue)</i>	
<i>Ephesians 6:10-18</i>	
Welcome Tidings .....	237
September	
The Holy Spirit.....	241
9. <i>The Advent of the Spirit</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	243
69. <i>The Faith of Joseph (11:22)</i>	
The Life of David.....	249
21. <i>His Final Words with Saul</i>	
Heart Work.....	253
<i>Part Three</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	257
4. <i>The Israel of God</i>	
The Right Use of the Law .....	261
<i>By John Newton</i>	
Dangerous Dainties .....	266
October	
The Holy Spirit.....	270

<i>10. The Advent of the Spirit (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	272
<i>70. The Faith of Moses' Parents (11:23)</i>	
The Life of David.....	278
<i>22. His Unbelief</i>	
Heart Work.....	282
<i>Part Four</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	286
<i>4. The Israel of God (Concluded)</i>	
Hearing the Rod .....	290
<i>Micah 6:9</i>	
Delusions Discovered.....	292
Credulous Simpletons .....	296
November	
The Holy Spirit.....	299
<i>11. The Advent of the Spirit (Part 3)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	301
<i>71. The Faith of Moses (11:24-27)</i>	
The Life of David.....	307
<i>23. His Stay at Ziklag</i>	
Heart Work.....	311
<i>Part Five</i>	
Dispensationalism .....	315
<i>5. The Zion of God</i>	
A Faithful Word .....	319
Vile!.....	322
Practical Godliness.....	325
Repentance .....	327
December	
The Holy Spirit.....	329
<i>12. The Advent of the Spirit (Part 4)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews .....	331
<i>72. The Faith of Moses (Continued) (11:25-27)</i>	
The Life of David.....	337
<i>24. His Sore Dilemma</i>	
A Warning.....	341

*Marks of Religious Declension*

Dispensationalism .....	342
-------------------------	-----

*6. The Grace of God*

Heart Work.....	346
-----------------	-----

*Part Six*

Assurance .....	350
-----------------	-----

*Dialogue 4*

Our Annual Letter .....	354
-------------------------	-----

Appendices

About Studies in the Scriptures.....	358
--------------------------------------	-----

Biography of A.W. Pink .....	360
------------------------------	-----

*By Erroll Hulse*

Chapel Library Resources .....	365
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# January

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 1. Introduction

During the last three years, these cover-page articles have been devoted to a consideration of the attributes of God our Father, and then to a contemplation of some of the glories of God our Redeemer. It seems fitting then that these should now be followed by a series upon God the Holy Spirit. The need for this is real and pressing, for ignorance concerning the third Person of the Godhead is most dishonoring to Him and highly injurious to ourselves. The late George Smeaton (1814-1889) of Scotland began his excellent work upon the Holy Spirit by saying, “Wherever Christianity has been a living power, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has uniformly been regarded equally with the atonement and justification by faith as the article of a standing or falling church. The distinctive feature of Christianity, as it addresses itself to man’s experience, is the work of the Spirit, which not only elevates it far above all philosophical speculation, but also above every other form of religion.”

Not at all too strong was the language of Samuel Chadwick when he said, “The gift of the Spirit is the crowning mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It was for this all the rest was. The incarnation and crucifixion, the resurrection and ascension were all preparatory to Pentecost. Without the gift of the Holy Spirit, all the rest would be useless. The great thing in Christianity is the gift of the Spirit. The essential, vital, central element in the life of the soul and the work of the church is the Person of the Spirit” (*Joyful News*, 1911).

The great importance of a reverent and prayerful study of this subject should be apparent to every real child of God. The repeated references made to the Spirit by Christ in His final discourse (John 14 to 16) at once intimates this. The particular work which has been committed to Him furnishes clear proof of it. There is no spiritual good communicated to anyone but by the Spirit. Whatever God in His grace works in us, it is by the Spirit. The only sin for which there is no forgiveness is one committed against the Spirit—how necessary is it then that we should be well-instructed in the Scripture doctrine concerning Him! The great abuse there has been in all ages under the pretense of His holy name should prompt unto diligent study. Finally, the awful ignorance which now so widely prevails upon the Spirit’s office and operations urges us to put forth our best efforts.



Yet important as is our subject and prominent as is the place given to it in Holy Writ, it seems that it has always met with a considerable amount of neglect and pervasion. Thomas Goodwin commenced his massive work on “The Work of the Holy Spirit in our Salvation” (1660) by affirming, “There is a general omission in the saints of God, in their not giving the Holy Spirit that glory that is due to His person and for His great work of salvation in us, insomuch that we have in our hearts almost forgotten this Third Person.” If that could be said in the midst of the palmy days of the Puritans, what language would be required to set forth the awful spiritual ignorance and impotency of this benighted twentieth century!

In the Preface to his lectures on “The Person, Godhead, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit” (1817), Robert Hawker wrote, “I am the more prompted to this service from contemplating the present awful day of the world. Surely the ‘last days’ and the ‘perilous times,’ so expressly spoken of by the Spirit, are come (1Ti 4:1). The flood gates of heresy are broken up and are pouring forth their deadly poison in various streams through the land. In a more daring and open manner, the denial of the Person, Godhead, and ministry of the Holy Spirit is come forward and indicates the tempest to follow. In such a season it is needful to contend, and that earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints. Now in a more awakened manner ought the people of God to remember the words of Jesus, and ‘to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.’”

So again, in 1880, George Smeaton wrote, “We may safely affirm that the doctrine of the Spirit is almost entirely ignored.” And let us add, wherever little honor is done to the Spirit, there is grave cause to suspect the genuineness of any profession of Christianity. Against this it may be replied, such charges as the above no longer hold good. Would to God they did not, but they do. While it be true that during the past two generations much has been written and spoken on the person of the Spirit, yet, for the most part, it has been of a sadly inadequate and erroneous character. Much dross has been mingled with the gold. A fearful amount of unscriptural nonsense and fanaticism has marred the testimony. Furthermore, it cannot be gainsaid that it is no longer generally recognized that supernatural agency is imperatively required in order for the redemptive work of Christ to be *applied* to sinners. Rather do *actions* show it is now widely held that if unregenerate souls are instructed in the letter of Scripture their own will-power is sufficient to enable them to “decide for Christ.”

In the great majority of cases, professing Christians are too puffed up by a sense of what they suppose *they* are doing *for* God, to earnestly study what God has promised to do for and in His people. They are so occupied with their fleshly efforts to “win souls for Christ” that they feel not their own deep need of the Spirit’s anointing. The leaders of “Christian” (?) enterprise are so concerned in multiplying “Christian workers” that quantity and not quality is the main consideration. How few today recognize that if the number of “missionaries” on the foreign field were increased twenty fold the next year, that that, of itself, *would not ensure* the genuine salvation of one additional heathen? Even though every new missionary *were* “sound in the faith” and preached only “the truth,” that would not add one iota of spiritual power to the missionary forces, without the Holy Spirit’s unction and blessing! The same principle holds good everywhere. If the orthodox seminaries and the much advertised Bible institutes turned out one hundred times more men than they are now doing, the churches would not be one whit better off than they are, unless God vouchsafed a fresh outpouring of His Spirit. In like manner, no Sunday school is strengthened by the mere multiplication of its teachers.

O my readers, face the solemn fact that the greatest lack of all in Christendom today is *the absence* of the Holy Spirit’s power and blessing. Review the activities of the past thirty years. Millions of dollars have been freely devoted to the support of professed Christian enterprises.

Bible institutes and schools have turned out “trained workers” by the thousands. Bible conferences have sprung up on every side like mushrooms. Countless booklets and tracts have been printed and circulated. Time and labor have been given by an almost incalculable number of “personal workers.” And *with what results?* Has the standard of personal piety advanced? Are the churches less worldly? Are their members more Christ-like in their daily walk? Is there more godliness in the home? Are the children more obedient and respectful? Is the Sabbath-day being increasingly sanctified and kept holy? Has the standard of honesty in business been raised?

Those blest with any spiritual discernment can return but one answer to the above questions. In spite of all the huge sums of money that have been spent, in spite of all the labor which has been put forth, in spite of all the new workers that have been added to the old ones, the spirituality of Christendom is at a far lower ebb today than it was thirty years ago. Numbers of professing Christians have increased, fleshly activities have multiplied, but spiritual power has waned. Why? *Because there is a grieved and quenched Spirit in our midst.* While HIS blessing is withheld, there can be no improvement. What is needed today is for the saints to get down on their faces before God, cry unto Him in the name of Christ to so work again, that what has grieved His Spirit may be put away and the channel of blessing once more be opened.

Until the Holy Spirit is again given His rightful place in our hearts, thoughts, and activities, there can be no improvement. Until it be recognized that we are entirely dependent upon *His* operations for all spiritual blessing, the root of the trouble cannot be reached. Until it be recognized that it is, “Not by might, [of trained workers] nor by power [of intellectual argument or persuasive appeal], but by *MY SPIRIT*, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Zec 4:6), there will be no deliverance from that fleshly zeal which is not according to knowledge and which is now paralyzing Christendom. Until the Holy Spirit is honored, sought unto, and counted upon, the present spiritual drought must continue. May it please our gracious God to give the writer those messages and prepare the hearts of our readers to receive that which will be unto His glory, the furtherance of His cause upon earth, and the good of His dear people. Brethren, pray for us.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 61. The Life of Abraham (11:9-10)

In the preceding article, we considered the appearing of the Lord unto idolatrous Abraham in Chaldea, the call which he then received to make a complete break from his old life, and to go forward in faith in complete subjection to the revealed will of God. This we contemplated as a figure and type, an illustration and example of one essential feature of regeneration, namely, God’s effectually calling His elect from death unto life, out of darkness into his marvelous light, with the blessed fruits this produces. As we saw on the last occasion, a mighty change was wrought in Abraham, so that his manner of life was completely altered, “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.”

Ere turning unto the verses which are to form our present portion, let us first ask and seek to answer the following question, Was Abraham's response to God's call a perfect one? Was his obedience flawless? Ah, dear reader, is it difficult to anticipate the answer? There has been only one perfect life lived on this earth. Moreover, had there been no failure in Abraham's walk, would not the type have been faulty? But God's types are accurate at every point and in His Word the Spirit has portrayed the characters of His people in the colours of truth and reality. He has faithfully described them as they actually were. True, a supernatural work of grace had been wrought in Abraham, but the "flesh" had not been removed from him. True, a supernatural faith had been communicated to him, but the root of unbelief had not been taken out of him. Two contrary principles were at work within Abraham (as they are in us) and *both* of these were evidenced.

God's requirements from Abraham were clearly made known, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Gen 12:1). The first response which he made to this is recorded in Genesis 11:31, "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." He left Chaldea, but instead of separating from his "kindred," he suffered his nephew Lot to accompany him, instead of forsaking his father's house, Terah was permitted to take the lead, and instead of entering Canaan, Abraham stopped short and settled in Haran. Abraham temporized—his obedience was partial, faltering, tardy. He yielded to the affections of the flesh. Alas, cannot both writer and reader see here a plain reflection of himself, a portrayal of his own sad failures! Yes, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Pro 27:19).

But let us earnestly seek grace at this point to be much upon our guard lest we "wrest" (2Pe 3:16) to our own hurt what has just been before us. If the thought arises, "O well, Abraham was not perfect, *he* did not always do as God commanded him, so it cannot be expected that *I* should do any better than he did," then recognize that this is a temptation from the devil. Abraham's failures are not recorded for us to shelter behind, for us to make them so many palliations for our own sinful falls. No, rather are they to be regarded as so many warnings for us to take to heart and prayerfully heed. Such warnings only leave us the more without excuse. And when we discover that we have sadly repeated the backslidings of the Old Testament saints, that very discovery would but humble us the more before God, move to a deeper repentance, lead to increasing self-distrust, and issue in a more earnest and constant seeking of divine grace to uphold and maintain us in the paths of righteousness.

Though Abraham failed, there was no failure in God. Blessed indeed is it to behold His long-suffering, His super-abounding grace, His unchanging faithfulness, and the eventual fulfilling of His own purpose. This reveals to us, for the joy of our hearts and the worshipping praise of our souls, another reason why the Holy Spirit has so faithfully placed on record the shadows as well as the lights in the lives of the OLD TESTAMENT saints—they are to serve not only as solemn warnings for us to heed, but also as so many examples of that marvelous patience of God that bears so long and so tenderly with the dullness and waywardness of His children, examples too of that infinite mercy which deals with His people not after their sins, nor rewards them according to their iniquities. O how the realization of this should melt our hearts and evoke true worship and thanksgiving unto "the God of *all* grace" (1Pe 5:10). It will be so, it must be so, in every truly regenerate soul. Though the unregenerate will only turn the very grace of God "into lasciviousness" (Jude 1:4) unto their eternal undoing.

The sequel to Genesis 11:31 is found in 12:5, “And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.” Though Abraham had settled down in Haran, God would not allow him to continue there indefinitely. The Lord had purposed that he should enter Canaan and no purpose of His can fail. God therefore tumbled him out of the nest which he had made for himself (Deu 32:11-12) and very solemn is it to observe the means which he used, “And Terah died in Haran” (Gen 11:32 and cf. Act 7:4)—death had to come in before Abraham left Halfway House! He never started across the wilderness until death severed that tie of the flesh which had held him back. But that with which we desire to be specially occupied at this point is the wondrous love of God toward His erring child.

“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6). Blessed, thrice blessed, is this. Though the dogs are likely to consume it unto their own ruin, yet that must not make us withhold this sweet portion of “the children’s bread.” The immutability of the divine nature is the saints’ indemnity. God’s unchangeableness affords the fullest assurance of His faithfulness in the promises. No change in us can alter His mind, no unfaithfulness on our part will cause Him to revoke His word. Unstable though we be, sorely tempted as we often are, tripped up as may frequently be our case, yet God “*shall* also confirm you unto the end...God is faithful” (1Co 1:8-9). The powers of Satan and the world are against us, suffering and death before us, a treacherous and fearful heart within us, yet God *will* “confirm us to the end.” He did Abraham. He will us. Hallelujah!

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Heb 11:9). This verse brings before us the second effect or proof of Abraham’s faith. In the previous verse, the apostle had spoken of the place from whence Abraham was called, here of the place to which he was called. There he had shown the power of faith in self-denial in obedience to God’s command, here we behold the patience and constancy of faith in waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. But the mere reading of this verse by itself is not likely to make much impression upon us. We need to diligently consult and carefully ponder other passages in order to be in a position to appreciate its real force.

First of all we are told, “And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land” (Gen 12:6). Unless a supernatural work of grace had been wrought in Abraham’s heart, subduing (though not eradicating) his natural desires and reasonings, he certainly would not have remained in Canaan. An idolatrous people were already occupying the land. Again, we are told that “He [God] gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much to set his foot on” (Act 7:5). Only the unclaimed tracts, which were commonly utilized by those having flocks and herds, were available for his use. Not an acre did he own, for he had to “purchase” a plot of ground as a burying place for his dead (Gen 23). What a trial of faith was this, for Hebrews 11:8 expressly declares that he was afterward to “receive” that land “for an inheritance.” Yet instead of this presenting a difficulty, it only enhances the beauty and accuracy of the type.

The Christian has also been begotten “to an inheritance” (1Pe 1:4), but he does not fully enter into it the moment he is called from death unto life. No, instead, he is left here (very often) for many years to fight his way through an hostile world and against an opposing devil. During that fight he meets with many discouragements and receives numerous wounds. Hard duties have to be performed, difficulties overcome, and trials endured, before the Christian enters fully into that

inheritance unto which divine grace has appointed him. And naught but a divinely bestowed and divinely maintained faith is sufficient for these things—that alone will sustain the heart in the face of losses, reproaches, painful delays. It was thus with Abraham. It was by faith he left the land of his birth, started out on a journey he knew not whither, crossed a dreary wilderness, and then sojourned in tents for more than half a century in a strange land.

Rightly did the Puritan Thomas Manton (1620-1677) say, “From God’s training up Abraham in a course of difficulties, we see it is no easy matter to go to heaven. There is a great deal of ado to unsettle a believer from the world and there is a great deal of ado to fix the heart in the expectation of heaven. First there must be self-denial in coming out of the world and divorcing ourselves from our bosom sins and dearest interests, and then there must be patience shown in waiting for God’s mercy to eternal life, waiting His leisure as well as performing His will. Here is the time of our exercise, and we must expect it, since the father of the faithful was thus trained up ere he could inherit the promises.”

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country” (Heb 11:9). The force of this will be more apparent if we link together two statements in Genesis, “And the Canaanite was then in the land” (Gen 12:6), “And the LORD said unto Abram...all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever” (Gen 13:14-15). Here was the ground which Abraham’s faith rested upon, the plain word of Him that cannot lie. Upon that promise his heart reposed and therefore he was occupied not with the Canaanites, who were then in the land, but with the invisible Jehovah who had pledged it unto him. How different was the case of the spies, who, in a later day, went up into this very land, with the assurance of the Lord that it was a “good land.” Their report was “the land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we *saw* in it are men of a great stature. And there we *saw* the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (Num 13:32-33).

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country” (Heb 11:9). As it was by faith that Abraham went out of Chaldea, so it was by faith he remained, out of the country of which he was originally a native. This illustrates the fact that not only do we become Christians by an act of faith (the yielding up of the whole man unto God), but that as Christians we are called upon to *live* by faith (Gal 2:20), to walk by faith and not by sight (2Co 5:7). The place where Abraham now abode is here styled “the land of promise,” rather than Canaan, to teach us that it is God’s promise which puts vigour into faith. Note how both Moses and Joshua, at a later day, sought to quicken the faith of the Israelites by this means, “Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers *hath promised* thee” (Deu 6:3). “And the LORD your God, He shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God *hath promised* unto you” (Jos 23:5).

“As in a strange country” (Heb 11:9). This tells us how Abraham regarded that land which was then occupied by the Canaanites and how he conducted himself in it. He purchased no farm, built no house, and entered into no alliance with its people. True, he entered into a league of peace and amity with Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre (Gen 14:13), but it was as a stranger and not as one who had any thing of his own in the land. He reckoned that country no more his own than any other land in the world. He took no part in its politics, had nothing to do with its religion, had very little social intercourse with its people, but lived by faith and found his joy and satisfaction in communion with the Lord. This teaches us that though the Christian is still in the world, he is

not of it, nor must he cultivate its friendship (Jam 4:4). He may use it as necessity requires, but he must ever be on his prayerful guard against abusing it (1Co 7:31).

“Dwelling in tabernacles.” These words inform us both of Abraham’s manner of life and disposition of heart during his sojourning in Canaan. Let us consider them from this twofold viewpoint. Abraham did not conduct himself as the possessor of Canaan, but as a foreigner and pilgrim in it. To Heth he confessed, “I am a stranger and sojourner with you” (Gen 23:4). As the father of the faithful, he set an example of self-denial and patience. It was not that he was unable to purchase an estate, build an elaborate mansion, and settle down in some attractive spot, for Genesis 13:2 tells us that “Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold,” but God had not called him unto this. Ah, my reader, a palace without the enjoyed presence of the Lord, is but an empty bauble, whereas a prison-dungeon occupied by one in real communion with Him, may be the very vestibule of heaven.

Living in a strange country, surrounded by wicked heathen, had it not been wiser for Abraham to erect a strongly fortified castle? A “tent” offers little or no defense against attack. Ah, but “the angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7). And Abraham both feared and trusted God. “Where faith enables men to live unto God, as unto their eternal concerns, it will enable them to trust unto Him in all the difficulties, dangers, and hazards of this life. To pretend a trust in God as unto our souls and invisible things, and not resign our temporal concerns with patience and quietness unto His disposal, is a vain pretense. And we may take hence an eminent trial of our faith. Too many deceive themselves with a presumption of faith in the promises of God, as unto things future and eternal. They suppose that they do so believe, as that they shall be eternally saved, but if they are brought into any trial, as unto things temporal, wherein they are concerned, they know not what belongs unto the life of faith, nor how to trust God in a due manner. It was not so with Abraham. His faith acted itself uniformly with respect to the providences, as well as the promises of God” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Abram’s “dwelling in tents” also denoted the disposition of his heart. A life of faith is one which has respect unto things spiritual and eternal and therefore one of its fruits is to be contented with a very small portion of earthly things. Faith not only begets a confidence and joy in the things promised, but it also works a composure of spirit and submission to the Lord’s will. A little would serve Abraham on earth because he expected so much in heaven. Nothing is more calculated to deliver the heart from covetousness, from lusting after the perishing things of time and sense, from envying the poor rich, than to heed that exhortation, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2). But it is one thing to quote that verse and another to put it into practice. If we are the children of Abraham, we must emulate the example of Abraham. Are *our* carnal affections mortified? Can we submit to a pilgrim’s fare without murmuring? Are we enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2Ti 2:3)?

The tent-life of the patriarchs demonstrated their pilgrim character. It made manifest their contentment to live upon the *surface* of the earth, for a tent has no foundation, and can be pitched or struck at short notice. They were sojourners here and just passing through this wilderness scene without striking their roots into it. Their tent life spoke of their separation from the world’s allurements, politics, friendships, religion. It is deeply significant to note that when reference is made to Abraham’s “tent,” there is mention also of his “altar”—“and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD” (Gen 12:8)—“and he went on his journeys...unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning...unto the place of the altar” (Gen 13:3-4)—“Then Abram removed his tent, and came

and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD” (Gen 13:18). Observe carefully the *order* in each of these passages. There must be heart *separation* from the world before a thrice holy God can be *worshipped* in spirit and in truth.

“Dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Heb 11:9). The Greek here is more expressive than our translation, “in tents dwelling.” The Holy Spirit emphasized first not the act of dwelling, but the fact that this dwelling was in *tents*. The mention of Isaac and Jacob in this verse is for the purpose of calling our attention unto the further fact that Abraham continued thus for the space of almost a century, Jacob not being born until he had sojourned in Canaan for eighty-five years! Herein we are taught that “when we are once engaged and have given up ourselves to God in a way of believing, there must be no choice, no dividing or halting, no halving, but we must follow Him fully, wholly, living by faith in all things” (John Owen), and that unto the very end of our earthly course.

There does not seem to be anything requiring us to believe that Isaac and Jacob shared Abraham’s tent, rather is the thought that they also lived the same pilgrim’s life in Canaan. As Abraham was a sojourner in that land, without any possession there, so were they. The “with” may be extended to cover all that is said in the previous part of the verse, indicating it was “by faith” that both Abraham’s son and grandson followed the example set them. The words which follow confirm this—they were “the heirs with him of the same promise.” That is indeed a striking expression, for ordinarily sons are merely “heirs” and not joint-heirs with their parents. This is to show us that Isaac was not indebted to Abraham for the promise, nor Jacob to Isaac, each receiving the same promise direct from God. This is clear from a comparison of Genesis 13:15 and 17:8 with 26:3 and 28:13, 35:12. It also tells us that if we are to have an interest in the blessings of Abraham, we must walk in the steps of his faith.

Very blessed and yet very searching is the principle exemplified in the last clause of Hebrews 11:9. God’s saints are all of the same spiritual disposition. They are members of the same family, united to the same Christ, indwelt by the same Spirit. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul” (Act 4:32). They are governed by the same laws, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10). They all have one aim, to please God and glorify Him on earth. They are called to the same privileges, “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us,” etc. (2Pe 1:1).

“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10). Ah, here is the explanation of what has been before us in the previous verse, as the opening “for” intimates. Abraham was walking by faith and not by sight and therefore his heart was set upon things above and not upon things below. It is the exercise of faith and hope unto heavenly objects which makes us carry ourselves with a loose heart toward worldly comforts. Abraham realized that his portion and possession was not on earth, but in heaven. It was this which made him content to dwell in tents. He did not build a city, as Cain did (Gen 4:17), but “looked for” one of which God himself is the maker. What an illustration and exemplification was this of the opening verse of our chapter, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1).

That for which Abraham looked was heaven itself, here likened unto a city with foundations, in manifest antithesis from the “tents” which have no foundations. Various figures are used to express the saints’ everlasting portion. It is called an “inheritance” (1Pe 1:4), to signify the freeness of its tenure. It is denominated “many mansions” in the Father’s house. It is styled an “heavenly country” (Heb 11:16) to signify its spaciousness. There are various resemblances between heaven and a “city.” A city is a civil society that is under government. So in heaven there

is a society of angels and saints ruled by God (Heb 12:22-24). In Bible days, a city was a place of safety, being surrounded by strong and high walls. So in heaven we shall be eternally secure from sin and Satan, death and every enemy. A city is well stocked with provisions. So in heaven nothing will be lacking which is good and blessed. The “foundations” of the heavenly city are the eternal decree and love of God, the unalterable covenant of grace, Christ Jesus the Rock of Ages, on which it stands firm and immovable.

It is the power of a faith which is active and operative that will sustain the heart under hardships and sufferings as nothing else will. “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Co 4:16-18). As John Owen well said, “This is a full description of Abraham’s faith, in the operation and effect here ascribed to it by the apostle. And herein it is exemplary and encouraging to all believers under their present trials and sufferings.”

Ah, my brethren and sisters, do we not see from that which has been before us *why* the attractions of the world or the depressing effects of suffering have such a power upon us? Is it not because we are negligent in the stirring up of our faith to “lay hold of the hope which is set before us”? If we meditated more frequently upon the glory and bliss of heaven, and were favored with foretastes of it in our souls, would we not sigh after it more ardently and press forward unto it more earnestly? “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56), and if we had more serious and spiritual thoughts of the day to come, we would not be so sad as we often are. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:3), for it lifts the heart above this scene and carries us in spirit within the veil. The more our hearts are attracted to heaven, the less will the poor things of this world appeal to us.

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### 13. His Sojourn at Ziph

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psa 34:19)—some internal, others external, some from friends, others from foes, some more directly at the hand of God, others more remotely by the instrumentality of the devil. Nor should this be thought strange. Such has been the lot of all God’s children in greater or less degree. Nor ought we to expect much comfort in a world which so basely crucified the Lord of Glory. The sooner the Christian makes it his daily study to pass through this world as a stranger and pilgrim, anxious to depart and be with Christ, the better for his peace of mind. But it is natural to cling tenaciously to this life and to love the things of time and sense, and therefore most of the Lord’s people have to encounter many buffetings and have many disappointments before they are brought to hold temporal things with a light hand and before their silly hearts are weaned from that which satisfies not.



There is scarcely any affliction which besets the suffering people of God that the subject of these articles did not experience. David, in the different periods of his varied life, was placed in almost every situation in which a believer, be he rich or poor in this world's goods, can be placed. This is one feature which makes the study of his life of such practical interest unto us today. And this also it was which experimentally fitted him to write so many psalms, which the saints of all ages have found so perfectly suited to express unto God the varied feelings of their souls. No matter whether the heart be cast down by the bitterest grief, or whether it be exultant with overflowing joy, nowhere can we find language more appropriate to use in our approaches unto the Majesty on High than in the recorded sobs and songs of him who tasted the bitters of cruel treatment and base betrayals, and the sweetness of human success and spiritual communion with the Lord, as few have done.

Oftentimes the providences of God seem profoundly mysterious to our dull perceptions and strange unto us do appear the schoolings through which He passes His servants. Nevertheless, faith is assured that omniscience makes no mistakes and He who is love causes none of His children a needless tear. Beautifully did C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) introduce his exposition of Psalm 59 by saying, "Strange that the painful events in David's life should end in enriching the repertoire of the national minstrelsy. Out of a sour, ungenerous soil spring up the honey-bearing flowers of psalmody. Had he never been cruelly hunted by Saul, Israel and the church of God in after ages would have missed this song. The music of the sanctuary is in no small degree indebted to the trials of the saints. Affliction is the tuner of the harps of sanctified songsters." Let every troubled reader seek to lay this truth to heart and take courage.

"And David abode in the wilderness in strongholds, 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 23:14). It is blessed to behold David's self-restraint under sore provocation. Though perfectly innocent, so far as his conduct toward Saul was concerned, that wicked king continued to hound him without any rest. David had conducted himself honorably in every public station he filled and now he has to suffer disgrace in the eyes of the people as a hunted outlaw. Great must have been the temptation to put an end to Saul's persecution by the use of force. He was a skilled leader, had six hundred men under him (1Sa 23:13), and he might easily have employed strategy, lured his enemy into a trap, fallen upon and slain him. Instead, he possessed his soul in patience, walked in God's ways, and waited God's time. And the Lord honored this as the sequel shows.

Ah, dear reader, it is written, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Pro 16:32). O for more godly self-control—for this we should pray earnestly and oft. Are you, like David was, sorely oppressed? Are you receiving evil at the hands of those from whom you might well expect good? Is there some Saul mercilessly persecuting you? Then no doubt you too are tempted to take things into your own hands, perhaps have recourse to the law of the land. But O tried one, suffer us to gently remind you that it is written, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath...vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink" (Rom 12:19-20). Remember too the example left us by the Lord Jesus, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1Pe 2:23).

"And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood" (1Sa 23:15). How this illustrates what we are told in Galatians 4:29, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now"! And let us not miss the deeper spiritual meaning of this—the opposition which Isaac encountered

from Ishmael adumbrated the lustings of the “flesh” against “the spirit.” There is a continual warfare within every real Christian between the principle of sin and the principle of grace, commonly termed “the two natures.” There is a spiritual Saul who is constantly seeking the life of a spiritual David. It is the “old man” with his affections and appetites, seeking to slay the new man. Against his relentless attacks, we need ever to be on our guard.

“And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood” (1Sa 23:15). “Ziph” derived its name from a city in the tribe of Judah (Jos 15:24). It is surely significant that “Ziph” signifies “a refining place.” Possibly the “mountain” there (1Sa 23:14) was rich in minerals and at Ziph there was a smelter and refiner. Be this as it may, the spiritual lesson is here writ too plain for us to miss. The hard knocks which the saint receives from a hostile world, the persecutions he endures at the hands of those who hate God, the trials through which he passes in this scene of sin, may, and should be, improved to the good of his soul. O may many of the Lord’s people prove that these “hard times” through which they are passing are a “refining place” for their faith and other spiritual graces.

“And Jonathan Saul’s son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, ‘Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house’” (1Sa 23:16-18). These verses record the final meeting on earth between David and the weak, vacillating Jonathan. Attached to David as he was by a strong natural affection, yet he lacked grace to throw in his lot with the hunted fugitive. Refusing to join with his father in persecuting David, yet the pull of the palace and the court was too strong to be resisted. He stands as a solemn example of the spiritual compromiser, of the man who is naturally attracted to Christ, but lacking a supernatural knowledge of Him which leads to full surrender to Him. That he “strengthened David’s hand in God” no more evidenced him to be a regenerate man, than do the words of Saul in verse 21. Instead of his words in 1 Samuel 23:17 coming true, he fell by the sword of the Philistines on Gilboa.

“Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand” (1Sa 23:19-20). Alas, what is man and how little to be depended upon! Here was David seeking shelter from his murderous foe, and that among the people of his own tribe, and there were they, in order to curry favor with Saul, anxious to betray him into his hands. It was a gross breach of hospitality, and there was no excuse for it, for Saul had not sought unto nor threatened them. It mattered not to them though innocent blood were shed, so long as they procured the smile of the apostate monarch. That day alone will show how many have fallen victims before those who cared for nothing better than the favor of those in authority.

“And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me” (1Sa 23:21). Thankfully did Saul receive the offer of these treacherous miscreants. Observe well how he used the language of piety while bent on committing the foulest crime! Oh my reader, for your own good we beg you to take heed unto this. Require something more than fair words, or even religious phrases, before you form a judgment of another, and still more so before you place yourself in his power. Promises are easily made and easily broken by most people. The name of God is glibly taken upon the lips of multitudes who have no fear of God in their hearts. Note too

how the wretched Saul represented himself to be the aggrieved one and construes the perfidy of the Ziphites as their loyalty to the king.

“Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me that he dealeth very subtlety. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah” (1Sa 23:22-23). Before he journeyed to Ziph, Saul desired more specific information as to exactly where David was now located. He knew that the man he was after had a much better acquaintance than his own of that section of the country. He knew that David was a clever strategist—perhaps he had fortified some place, and the king wished for details, so that he might know how large a force would be needed to surround and capture David and his men. Apparently Saul felt so sure of his prey, he considered there was no need for hurried action.

The news that the Ziphites had proven unfaithful reached the ears of David, and though the king’s delay gave him time to retreat to the wilderness of Maon (1Sa 23:24), yet he was now in a sore plight. His situation was desperate and none but an Almighty hand could deliver him. Blessed is it to see him turning at this time unto the living God and spreading the urgent case before Him. It was then that he prayed the prayer that is recorded in Psalm 54, the superscription of which reads, “A Psalm of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?” In it we are given to hear him pouring out his heart unto the Lord, and unto it we now turn to consider a few of its details.

“Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength” (Psa 54:1). David was in a position where he was beyond the reach of human assistance, only a miracle could now save him, therefore did he supplicate the miracle-working God. Without any preamble, David went straight to the point and cried, “Save me, O God.” Keilah would not shelter him, the Ziphites had basely betrayed him, Saul and his men thirsted for his blood. Other refuge there was none; God alone could help him. His appeal was to His glorious “Name,” which stands for the sum of all His blessed attributes and to His righteousness. “Judge me by thy strength” signifies: Secure justice for me, for none else will give it me. This manifested the innocence of his cause. Only when our case is pure can we call upon the power of divine justice to vindicate us.

“Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth” (Psa 54:2). How *we* need to remember and turn unto the Lord when enduring the contradiction of sinners against ourselves, to look above and draw strength from God, so that we be not weary and faint in our minds. Well did C. H. Spurgeon write, “As long as God hath an open ear we cannot be shut up in trouble. All other weapons may be useless, but all prayer is evermore available. No enemy can spike this gun.” “For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah” (Psa 54:3). Those who had no acquaintance with David, and so could have no cause for ill-will against him, were his persecutors—strangers were they to God. In such circumstance, it is well for us to plead before God that we are being hated for *His* sake.

We must not here expound the remainder of this Psalm. But let us note three other things in it. First, the marked change in the last four verses, following the “Selah” at the end of verse 3. On that word there Spurgeon wrote, “As if he said, ‘Enough of this, let us pause.’ He is out of breath with indignation. A sense of wrong bids him suspend the music awhile. It may also be observed, that more pauses would, as a rule, improve our devotions. We are usually too much in a hurry.” Second, his firm confidence in God and the assurance that his request would be granted. This appears in verses 4-6, particularly in the, “He *shall* reward evil unto mine enemies”—the “cut

them off” was not spoken in hot revenge, but as an Amen to the sure sentence of the just Judge. Third, his absolute confidence that his prayer was answered—the “hath delivered me” of verse 7 is very, very striking and with it should be carefully compared and pondered Mark 11:24.

It now remains for us to observe *how* God answered David’s prayer. “And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain of the south of Jeshimon” (1Sa 23:24). The term “wilderness” is rather misleading to English ears. It is not synonymous with desert, but is in contrast from cultivated farmlands and orchards, often signifying a wild forest. “And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them” (1Sa 23:25-26). How often is such the case with us. Some sore trial presses and we cry unto God for relief, but before His answer comes, matters appear to get worse. Ah, that is in order that His hand may be the more evident.

David’s plight was now a serious one, for Saul and his men had practically enveloped them and only a “mountain,” or more accurately, a steep cliff, separated them. Escape seemed quite cut off—outnumbered, surrounded, further flight was out of the question. At last Saul’s evil object appeared to be on the very point of attainment. But man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. Beautifully did Matthew Henry comment, “This mountain (or cliff) was an emblem of the divine providence coming between David and the destroyer, like the pillar of cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians.” Yet, a few hours at most, and Saul and his army would either climb or go around that crag. Now for the striking and blessed sequel.

“But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammahlekoth [The Rock of Divisions.] And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi” (1Sa 23:27-29). How marvelously and how graciously God times things! He who orders all events and controls all creatures, moved the Philistines to invade a portion of Saul’s territory, and tidings of this reached the king’s ear just at the moment David seemed on the brink of destruction. Saul at once turned his attention to the invaders and thus he was robbed of his prey and God glorified as his Protector. Thus, without striking a blow, David was delivered. O how blessed to know that the same God is *for* His people today, and without them doing a thing He can turn away those who are harassing. God *does* hear and answer the prayer of faith! David and his little force now had their opportunity to escape, and fled to the strongholds of Engedi, on the shore of the Dead Sea.

## COMING TO CHRIST

### Part 1

By way of introduction let us bring before the readers the following Scriptures. (1) “And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,” Joh 5:40. (2) “Come unto me, all ye that labour and

are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” Mat 11:28. (3) “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him,” Joh 6:44. (4) “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,” Joh 6:37. (5) “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. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple,” Luk 14:26-27. (6) “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,” 1Pe 2:4. (7) “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,” Heb 7:25.

The first of these passages applies to every unregenerate man and woman on this earth. While he is in a state of nature, no man can come to Christ. Though all excellencies, both divine and human, are found in the Lord Jesus, though He is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16), yet the fallen sons of Adam see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. They may be well instructed in “the doctrine of Christ,” they may believe unhesitatingly all that Scripture affirms concerning Him, they may frequently take His name upon their lips, profess to be resting on His finished work, sing His praises, yet their *hearts* are far from Him. The things of this world have the first place in their affections. The gratifying of self is their dominant concern. They surrender not their lives to Him. He is too holy to suit their love of sin. His claims are too exacting to suit their selfish hearts. His terms of discipleship are too severe to suit their fleshly ways. They *will not* yield to His Lordship—true alike with each one of us till God performs a miracle of grace upon our hearts.

The second of these passages contains a gracious invitation, made by the compassionate Savior to a particular class of sinners. The “all” is at once qualified, clearly and definitely, by the words which immediately follow it. The character of those to whom this loving word belongs is clearly defined—it is those who “labor” and are “heavy laden.” Most clearly then it applies not to the vast majority of our light-headed, gay-hearted, pleasure-seeking fellows, who have no regard for God’s glory and no concern about their eternal welfare. No, the word for such poor creatures is rather, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God *will* bring thee into judgment” (Ecc 11:9). But to those who have “labored” hard to keep the law and please God, who are “heavy laden” with a felt sense of their utter inability to meet His requirements, and who long to be delivered from the power and pollution of sin, Christ says, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”

The third passage quoted above at once tells us that “coming to Christ” *is not* the easy matter so many imagine it, nor so simple a thing as most preachers represent it to be. Instead of its so being, the incarnate Son of God positively declares that such an act is utterly impossible to a fallen and depraved creature unless and until divine power is brought to bear upon him. A most pride-humbling, flesh-withering, man-abasing word is this. “Coming to Christ” is a far, far different thing from raising your hand to be prayed for by some Protestant “priest,” coming forward and taking some cheap-jack evangelist’s hand, signing some “decision” card, uniting with some “church,” or any other of the “many inventions” (Ecc 7:29) of man. Before any one can or will “come to Christ,” the understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, the heart must be supernaturally changed, the stubborn will must be supernaturally broken.

The fourth passage is also one that is unpalatable to the carnal mind, yet is it a precious portion unto the Spirit-taught children of God. It sets forth the blessed truth of unconditional election, or the discriminating grace of God. It speaks of a favored people whom the Father giveth

to His Son. It declares that every one of that blessed company shall come to Christ—neither the effects of their fall in Adam, the power of indwelling sin, the hatred and untiring efforts of Satan, nor the deceptive delusions of blind preachers, will be able to finally hinder them—when God’s appointed hour arrives, each of His elect is delivered from the power of darkness and is translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. It announces that each such one who comes to Christ, no matter how unworthy and vile he be in himself, no matter how black and long the awful catalogue of his sins, He will by no means despise or fail to welcome him and under no circumstances will He ever cast him off.

The fifth passage is one that makes known the terms on which alone Christ is willing to receive sinners. Here the uncompromising claims of His holiness are set out. He must be crowned Lord of all or He will not be Lord at all. There must be the complete heart-renunciation of all that stands in competition with Him. He will brook no rival. All that pertains to “the flesh,” whether found in a loved one or in self, has to be hated. The “cross” is the badge of Christian discipleship, not a golden one worn on the body, but the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice ruling the heart. How evident is it, then, that a mighty, supernatural, divine work of grace *must* be wrought in the human heart, if any man will even *desire* to meet such terms!

The sixth passage tells us that the Christian is to *continue as he began*. We are to “come to Christ” not once and for all, but frequently, daily. He is the only one who can minister unto our needs and to Him we must constantly turn for the supply of them. In our felt emptiness, we must draw from His “fullness” (Joh 1:16). In our weakness, we must turn to Him for strength. In our ignorance, we must apply to Him for wisdom. In our falls into sin, we must seek afresh His cleansing. *All* that we need for time and eternity is stored up in Him—refreshment when we are weary (Isa 40:31), healing of body when we are sick (Exo 15:26), comfort when we are sad (1Pe 5:7), deliverance when we are tempted (Heb 2:18). If we have wandered away from Him, left our first love, then the remedy is to “repent, and do the *first* works” (Rev 2:5), that is, cast ourselves upon Him anew, come just as we did the first time we came to Him—as unworthy, self-confessed sinners, seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

The seventh passage assures us of the eternal security of those who do come. Christ saves “unto the uttermost” or “for evermore” those who come unto God by Him. He is not of one mind today and of another tomorrow. No, He is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1), and blessedly does He give proof of this, for “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Inasmuch as *His* prayers are effectual, for He declares that the Father hearest Him “always” (Joh 11:42), none whose name is indelibly stamped on the heart of our great High Priest can ever perish. Hallelujah!

Having sought to thus introduce some of the leading aspects of the subject which is to engage our attention, we now propose to enter into some detail as the Spirit of truth is pleased to grant us His much-needed assistance. Let us consider some of the

### I. Obstacles in coming to Christ.

Under this head it will be our endeavor to show *why* it is that the natural man is *unable* to “come to Christ.” As a starting point, let us again quote John 6:44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him.” The reason why this is such a “hard saying,” even unto thousands who profess to be Christians, is because they utterly fail to realize the terrible havoc which the Fall has wrought, and it is greatly to be feared, because they are themselves strangers to “the plague” of their own hearts (1Ki 8:38). Surely if the Spirit had ever awakened them from the sleep of spiritual death and given them to see something of the dreadful

state they were in by nature, and they had been brought to feel that the carnal mind *in them* was “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7), then they would no longer cavil against this solemn word of Christ’s. But the spiritually dead can neither see nor feel spiritually.

Wherein lies the total inability of the natural man? 1. It is *not in the lack of the necessary faculties*. This needs to be plainly insisted upon or otherwise fallen man would cease to be a responsible creature. Fearful as were the effects of the Fall, yet they deprived man of none of the faculties with which God originally endowed him. True it is that the coming in of sin took away from man all power to use those faculties aright, that is, to employ them for the glory of his Maker. Nevertheless, fallen man possesses identically the same threefold nature of spirit and soul and body, as he did before the Fall. No part of man’s being was annihilated, though each part was defiled and corrupted by sin. True, man died spiritually, but death is not extinction of being—spiritual death is *alienation from God* (Eph 4:18). The spiritually dead one is very much alive and active in the service of Satan.

No, the inability of fallen man to “come to Christ” lies in no physical or mental defect. He has the same feet to take him unto a place where the Gospel is preached, as he has to walk with to a picture-show. He has the same eyes by which to read the Holy Scriptures, as he has to read the world’s newspapers. He has the same lips and voice for calling upon God, as he now uses in idle talk or foolish song. So too he has the same mental faculties for pondering the things of God and the concerns of eternity, as he now uses so diligently in connection with his business. It is because of this that man “is without excuse” (Rom 1:20). It is the *misuse* of the faculties with which the Creator has endowed him which increases man’s guilt. Let every servant of God see to it that these things are constantly pressed upon their unsaved hearers.

2. We have to search deeper in order to find the seat of man’s spiritual impotency. His inability lies *in his corrupt nature*. Through Adam’s Fall, and through our own sin, our nature has become so debased and depraved that it is impossible for any man to “come to Christ,” to “love and serve Him,” to esteem Him more highly than all the world put together, and submit to His rule, until the Spirit of God renews him and implants a new nature. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters, nor an evil tree produce good fruit. Let us try and make this still clearer by an illustration. It is the *nature* of a vulture to feed upon carrion. True, it has the same bodily members to feed upon the wholesome grain the hens do, but it lacks the disposition and relish for it. It is the nature of a sow to wallow in the mire. True, it has the same legs as a sheep to conduct it to the meadow, but it lacks the desire for the green pastures. So it is with unregenerate man. He has the same physical and mental faculties as the regenerate has for the things and service of God, but he has no love for them.

Adam “begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Gen 5:3). What an awful contrast is found here from that which we read two verses before, “God created man, in the likeness of God made He him.” In the interval, Adam had fallen, and a fallen parent could beget only a fallen child, transmitting unto him his own depravity. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” (Job 14:4). Therefore do we find the sweet singer of Israel declaring, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa 51:5). Though, later, grace made him the man after God’s own heart, yet by nature, David (as we) was a mass of iniquity and sin. How early does this corruption of nature appear in children. “Even a child is known by his doings” (Pro 20:11). The evil bias of its heart is soon manifested—pride, self-will, vanity, lying, averseness to good, are the bitter fruits which quickly appear on the tender but vitiated twig.

3. The inability of the natural man to “come to Christ” lies in *the complete darkness of his understanding*. This leading faculty of the soul has been despoiled of its primitive glory and

covered over with confusion. Both mind and conscience are defiled “There is none that understandeth” (Rom 3:11). Solemnly did the apostle remind the saints “For ye were sometimes darkness” (Eph 5:8), not merely “in darkness,” but “darkness” itself. “Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness is over all the region. It is the land of darkness and shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whoever thou art, that art not born again” (Thomas Boston, 1680). “They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge” (Jer 4:22).

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). There is in the unregenerate *an opposition* to what is spiritual and an aversion against it. God has made a revelation of His will unto sinners touching the way of salvation, yet they will not walk therein. They hear that Christ alone is able to save, yet they refuse to part with those things that hinder their coming to Him. They hear that it is sin which slays the soul and yet they cherish it in their bosoms. They heed not the threats of God. Men believe that fire will burn them, and are at great pains to avoid it, yet they show by their actions that they regard the everlasting burnings as a mere scarecrow. The divine commandments are “holy, just, and good,” but men hate them, and observe them only so far as their respectability among men is promoted.

4. The inability of the natural man to “come to Christ” lies in *the complete corruption of his affections*. “Man as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is Christ Jesus so little beloved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the Fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of the world better than the ways of God” (C. H. Spurgeon, sermon on John 6:44).

The affections of the unrenewed man are wholly depraved and distempered. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and *desperately wicked*” (Jer 17:9). Solemnly did the Lord Jesus affirm that the affections of fallen man are a mother of abominations, “For from within [not from the devil!], out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mar 7:21-22). “The natural man’s affections are wretchedly misplaced. He is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be, fixed on the earth. His heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on, Acts 9:5. His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven, and therefore God calls to him to turn. He joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in. Glories in his shame and is ashamed of his glory. Abhors what he should desire and desires what he should abhor. Proverbs 2:13-15” (From Thomas Boston’s, *Fourfold State*).

5. The inability of the natural man to “come to Christ” lies in *the total perversity of his will*. “‘Oh!’ said the Arminian, ‘men may be saved if they will.’ We reply, ‘My dear sir, we all believe that, but it is just the *if they will* that is the difficulty.’ We assert that no man *will* come to Christ unless he be drawn, Nay, *we* do not assert it, but *Christ* Himself declares it—‘Ye will not come



unto me that ye might have life' (Joh 5:40), and as long as that 'ye will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will. It is strange how people, when talking about free will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. 'Now' says one, 'I believe men can be saved if they will.' My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the Gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever be constrained towards Christ" (C. H. Spurgeon).

"Now here is a threefold card against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken—a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly, distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says the man should not stoop. The will, opposite to the will of God, says, he will not. And the corrupt affections rising against the Lord, in defense of the corrupt will, says, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, till a day of power come, in which he is made a new creature" (Thomas Boston, 1676-1732). Perhaps some readers are inclined to say, "Such teaching as this is calculated to discourage sinners and drive them to despair." Our answer is, First, it is according to God's Word! Second, O that it may please Him to use this article *to* drive some to despair of all help from themselves. Third, it makes manifest the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit's working with such depraved and spiritually helpless creatures, if they are ever to savingly come to Christ. And until this is clearly perceived, HIS aid will never be *really* sought in earnest!

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 1. The Promises of God

The general policy which we have steadily sought to follow during the past eleven years has been that of seeking (by divine aid) the spiritual edification of our Christian readers. For this we have endeavored to set forth a well-balanced constructive ministry. Poisons do not nourish, nor does the refutation of error build up the soul. Very occasionally have we departed from our rule, and only then against our spiritual inclinations, for we know full well it is difficult to handle pitch without being defiled. But once or twice we have felt forced to lift up our voice and sound an alarm. We feel constrained to do so again. While Paul was at Athens and saw the city wholly given up to idolatry, "his spirit was stirred in him," and as we behold the reckless and irreverent handling of the Word of God, by many who style themselves the teachers of "dispensational truth," and witness the pernicious effects it has produced in the minds and lives of many, we are moved by what is, we trust, a holy indignation.

It is not our present purpose to take up seriatim the various postulates of this modern school of prophetic interpretation, nor to examine in detail the wild conclusions which have been drawn

from flimsy premises. Nor have we any expectation of converting from the error of their way any of the present-day leaders of this system which is growing in popularity. No, we would not waste valuable time on them, for it is our firm conviction that God has given them over to the spirit of delusion. If the Lord permits, we expect to deal with some other features of this “false doctrine” in later issues, but for the moment we confine our attention to one fearful evil which has been engendered by it, namely, the robbing of God’s children of many “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4).

We are not unmindful of the subtle distinctions which have been drawn by the above-mentioned teachers between the interpretation and the application of Scripture, nor of their oft-repeated slogan that, “All Scripture is *for* us, but it is not all *to* us, or *about* us.” Whatever may be thought of such a statement, this is clear and cannot be gainsaid, that there are now tens of thousands in Great Britain and the U.S.A. who say of large portions of God’s Word, “This is not for me; this belongs to the Jews. This relates not to the present dispensation, that concerns those who will be on earth during the great tribulation or the millennium.” And thus their souls are deprived of the *present* value of much which God Himself plainly declares *is* “profitable” for *us* (2Ti 3:16).

It may surprise some of our readers when we say that this limiting of so much of God’s Word to the Jews is an *ancient* lie of the devil’s dressed up in a new garb. Yet such it is. Nor should any be surprised at this news, for Scripture declares that, “There is *no new thing* under the sun” (Ecc 1:9). Two hundred and fifty years ago, in his work on “The Doctrine of the Saints’ Perseverance Explained and Confirmed,” John Owen wrote, “Some labor much to *rob believers* of the consolation intended for them in the evangelical promises of the Old Testament, though made in the general to the church on this account, (affirming) that they were made to the Jews, and being to them peculiar, our concernment lieth not now in them.” Over three hundred years ago, when the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (the “Episcopal Church”) were drawn up, the 7th read as follows, “The Old Testament is not contradictory to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament *everlasting* life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and men, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers (OLD TESTAMENT saints) did look *only for transitory promises*.”

Almost four hundred years ago, John Calvin (1509-1564), in his “Institutes” began his chapter on, “The Similarity of the Old and New Testaments” by saying, “From the preceding observations it may now be evidenced, that all those persons, from the beginning of the world, whom God has adopted into the society of His people, have been federally connected with Him by the same law and the same doctrine which are in force among us, but because it is of no small importance that this point be established, I shall show, by way of appendix, since the fathers were partakers with us of the same inheritance and hoped for the same salvation through the grace of our common Mediator, how far their condition in this connection was different from ours. For though the testimonies we have collected from the law and the prophets in proof of this, render it sufficiently evident that the people of God have never had any other rule of religion and piety, yet because some writers have raised many disputes concerning the difference of the Old and New Testaments, which may occasion doubts in the mind of an undiscerning reader, we shall assign a particular chapter for the better and more accurate discussion of this subject. Moreover, what would otherwise have been very useful, has now been rendered necessary for us by Servetus and some madmen of the sect of the Anabaptists, who entertain no other ideas of the Israelitish nation than of a herd of swine, whom they pretend to have been pampered by the Lord, in this world without the least hope of future immortality in heaven.”

One plain statement of Holy Writ is of infinitely more value than all the empty reasonings of carnal men. Such a statement we have concerning the promises of God in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” The line of thought in the context is easily followed. First, the apostle had intended to pay the Corinthians a second visit (2Co 1:15-16), but he had been providentially hindered (2Co 1:8-10). Second, knowing that his enemies were likely to use his delay as a taunt that he was ignorant of the Lord’s mind and fickle in the keeping of his word, the apostle anticipates this charge (2Co 1:17-18)—there were divine reasons why Paul had delayed his promised journey to them. Third, whether that satisfied the Corinthians or no, this could not be gainsaid, that there was no uncertainty about his preaching. He had proclaimed Jesus Christ among them in a plain and positive way (2Co 1:19).

Having reminded the Corinthians that the message he had delivered in their hearing on his first visit was invariable and constant (2Co 1:19), the apostle now gave proof of his assertion—*Christ* was the sum and substance of his preaching. He had known nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified (see 1Co 2:2), and since Christ Himself is always “yea” or unchanging, then his message was always “yea” or the same. The manner in which he now supplied proof of this was by affirming, “*For all the promises of God in him [viz. Christ] are yea, and in him [Christ], amen.*” Therefore, Christ cannot be “yea *and* nay.” The plain meaning of 2 Corinthians 1:20 is—The promises which God has given His people are absolutely reliable, for they were made to them *in Christ*. They are absolutely certain of fulfillment, for they are accomplished *in Him*.

1. Since the Fall alienated the creature from the Creator, there could be no intercourse between God and man but by some promise on His part. None can challenge anything from the Majesty on High without a warrant from Himself, nor could the conscience be satisfied unless it had a divine promise for any good that we hope for from God. 2. God will have His people ruled by promises in all ages so as to exercise faith, hope, prayer, dependence upon Himself. God gives us promises to test whether or not we trust Him. 3. The ground of the promises is the God-man Mediator, Jesus Christ, for all intercourse between God and us can only be in and through the appointed Daysman. Christ must receive all good for us and we must have it at second hand from Him. Hence “all the promises of God *in him* [Christ] are yea and amen.”

4. Let the Christian be ever on his guard never to contemplate any promise of God *apart from* Christ, whether the thing promised, the blessing desired, be temporal or spiritual, we cannot rightly or truly enjoy it except in and by Christ. Therefore did Paul remind the Galatians, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal 3:16), about which (D.V.) we shall have more to say later. All the promises of good to us are made *to Christ*, the Surety of the everlasting covenant, and are conveyed from Christ to us—both the promises and the things promised. “This is *the* [all-inclusive] promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1Jo 2:25), and as 1 John 5:11 tells us, “This life is in his Son”—and so of “grace” and whatsoever is in Him. “If I read any of the promises, I found that all and every one contained Christ in their bosom, He Himself being the one great Promise of the Bible. *To Him* they were all first given; *from Him* they derive all their efficacy, sweetness, value, and importance; *by Him* they are brought home to the heart; and *in Him* they are all yea and amen” (Robert Hawker, 1810).

5. All the promises of God are made in Christ, none of them can be of any good to those who are out of Christ, for a man out of Christ is out of the favor of God. God cannot look on such a man but as an object of His wrath, as fuel for His vengeance. There is no hope for any man till he

be in Christ. But it may be asked, Does not God do many good things to them that are out of Christ, sending His rain on the just as well as the unjust, and filling the bellies of the wicked with good things (Psa 17:14)? Yes, He does indeed, but are those temporal mercies *blessings*? Indeed they are not. As God says in Malachi 2:2, “I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart”—cf. Deuteronomy 28:15-20. Unto the wicked, the temporal mercies of God are like the food given to bullocks—they do but “prepare them for the day of slaughter” (Jer 12:3 and cf. Jam 5:5).

Having presented above a brief outline of the subject of the divine promises, let us now carefully observe the fact that 2 Corinthians 1:20 plainly affirms, “For *all* the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen.” How inexpressibly blessed is this to the humble-minded children of God—yet a mystery hidden from those who are wise in their own conceits. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us *all* things” (Rom 8:32). The promises of God are many, relating both to this life and also to that which is to come, concerning our temporal well-being as well as our spiritual, covering the needs of the body as well as the soul, but whatever be their character, not one of them could be made good unto us except in and through and by Him who died for us.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2Co 7:1). *What* promises? Why, those mentioned in the closing verses of the preceding chapter, of course. There we read, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; *as God hath said*, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2Co 6:16). And *where* had God said this? Why, away back in Leviticus 26:12, “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” That was a promise made to Israel in the days of Moses! Again, in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 we read, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,” which words are a manifest reference unto Jeremiah 31:9 and Hosea 1:9-10.

Now observe very particularly what the Holy Spirit says about *these* “promises” unto the New Testament saints. He makes no mention of His “applying” them. He says nothing about our “appropriating” them. Instead, He assures us, “*Having* these promises.” Yes, “these” *Old* Testament “promises” are *ours*—ours to enjoy, ours to feed upon, ours to delight in, ours to give praise for. Since *Christ* is ours, *all* things are ours (1Co 3:22-23). O my reader, allow no man, under the pretense of “rightly dividing” the Word of truth, to cut you off from any of the “exceeding great and precious” promises of your Father. If *he* is determined to confine himself to a few epistles in the New Testament, let him do so—that is his loss, but suffer him not to confine *you* to so narrow a place.

One other passage shall engage our attention and we will close this article. Writing to the New Testament saints, the apostle Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to say, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: *for he hath said*, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). And *to whom* do you suppose this blessed “promise” was first given? Why, to Joshua—see Joshua 1:5. Well did John Owen (following his reference to the religious thieves of his day, who sought to rob believers of the consolation intended for them in the evangelical promises of the Old Testament) say, “If this plea might be admitted, I know not any one promise that would more evidently fall under the power of it, than this we have now in consideration. It was made to a peculiar person and that upon a peculiar occasion; made to a general or captain of armies, with respect to the great wars he had to undertake, upon the special

command of God. May not a poor hungry believer say, What is this to me? I am not a general of an army, have no wars to make upon God's command, the virtue of this promise doubtless expired with the conquest of Canaan, and died with him to whom it was made. To manifest *the sameness* of love, that is in *all* the promises, with their establishment in one Mediator, and the general concernment of believers in every one of them, however, and on what occasion soever given to any, this promise to Joshua is here applied to the condition of the weakest, meanest, and poorest of the saints of God; to all, and every one of them, be their state and condition what it will. And doubtless, believers are not a little wanting in themselves, and their own consolation, that they do no more particularly close with those words of truth, grace, and faithfulness, which upon sundry occasions, and at divers times, have been given out unto the saints of old, even Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the residue of them, who walked with God in their generations: these things in an especial manner are recorded for *our* consolation, that we 'through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope' (Rom 15:4).

"Now the Holy Spirit, knowing the weakness of our faith, and how apt we are to be beaten from closing with the promises, and from mixing them with faith, upon the least discouragement that may arise (as indeed this is none of the least—the promise is not made to us, it was made to others, and they may reap the sweetness of it. God may be faithful in it, though we never enjoy the mercy intended in it, I say), in the next words, He leads believers by the hand to make the same conclusion with boldness and with confidence from this and the like promises, as David did of old, upon the many gracious assurances that he had received of the presence of God with him, 'So that [saith He, upon the account of that promise] we may say boldly [without staggering at it by unbelief] the Lord is *my* Helper.' This is a conclusion of faith, because God said to Joshua, a believer, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee'—though upon a particular occasion and in reference to a particular employment—*every* believer may say with boldness, 'He is *my* Helper'."

## LETTER TO A DEEPLY EXERCISED SOUL

Dear A.—You doubtless will be surprised that so humble and unworthy an individual as myself should attempt to address you. It is however by no means uncongenial, with my feelings, though under a deep sense of my utter inability to do so, suitable, but, "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens;" for Thou seest every secret and hidden thing and Thou knowest Thy handmaid altogether, and searchest all the hearts of the children of men. O minister to her present necessities, though the unworthiest of Thy creatures whom Thou hast brought up from the pit of corruption, and saved from the lowest hell, and raised from the gates of the grave, to tell her fellow-sinners that Thou hast saved to the uttermost. However low they may be sunk in the mire, Thine arm can reach them and Thy salvation set them on high. Breathe, Holy Comforter!—instruct Holy Teacher!—or we shall read and write in vain.

Dear A.—you lately desired to know of *yourself*. But O you little thought what the horrifying sight and awful realization of evil which the granting of such a desire would bring. Perhaps you hoped for more solid assurances that you were *right* by having your heart turned inside out. But

verily such a laying open of ourselves to ourselves makes all appear *wrong*. Perhaps you thought the painful sight would soften you into tears of penitence, and the humbling view lay you gently down in the dust of self-abasement, and that thus, as a polluted sinner, you should weep and love at the dear Redeemer's feet. But ah! These blessed feelings are more from the joys of salvation than the dark discoveries of guilt, more in being found than feeling we are lost. To know yourself and what your sin is, methinks you could not bear to the full extent. The corruption of fallen humanity is so offensive, its deceptiveness so deep, its outrage against omnipotence so daring, and its callousness under all so impenetrable, that surely the fullest sense of it must crush finite worms into despair and drive them out of existence. But mark, it would never bring them to the Mercy-seat. It would not fill them with prayer, and hope, and humble cries for pardon. The terrible majesty and holiness of the Being sinned against, and the feeling of His fearful and dreadful power, and justice, would strike the soul to a farther and farther distance from Him, not in the *softness* of contrition, but in the hardening of hopelessness. I do humbly believe that would be the effect of discovering the whole depth of our depravity in the full light of Jehovah's strict holiness, such will be the effect, in a lesser degree, as we discover some of that depravity by some rays of that searching light, for it is "light that maketh manifest." As Adam when he discovered his nakedness, did not run to God, but from Him, so it is with every soul of man, and so it seems with you. For you say that under insensibility, hardness, and carelessness, you are not driven to the throne of grace, but to the contrary. Sin does not bring forth *life*, but sin, when it is finished, "bringeth forth *death*," and as it works, produces deathliness of feeling.

All do not learn the mystery of iniquity to the same extent, but it is decreed every soul that is saved shall feel something of its painful experience, something of what they are saved from and out of, as well as what they are saved unto. In learning this, they find a strange work. In this lesson, many hard sayings which they can hardly bear. They have read that the "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and "that he who trusts in his own heart, is a fool." But they find it a very different thing to *feel* the deceivableness of unrighteousness at work within, and to be brought off from trusting the heart, because they feel its treachery and vileness. They have *confessed* they were sinners and believed it, but to *feel* sin working distance, darkness, coldness, and hardness, is experimental proof of sinnership, which feels more like *destruction* than *salvation*, and seems very far from drawing them to God. Should this present year of your life be spent chiefly under this dark discipline, you will often feel that if the blessing *is* coming, it is indeed "cross-handed" and that if prayer is being answered, it is truly by most unexpected contrarieties. Nevertheless, as the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands must destroy all kingdoms that it may fill the whole earth, so must this wondrous Stone break in pieces in our souls the iron, brass, clay, the silver, and the gold (Dan 2:34)—things that we have counted refuse and things that we have held in estimation. All that is ours must come forth to destruction that we may be saved and Christ to us "all in all." He cannot fill us while we are filled, or half filled, with anything else, seem it badness or goodness. Whatever form it may assume, be it not Christ, it is naught and is a work of the flesh or the devil. But for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil (1Jo 3:8). He comes to the renewed soul as a "refiner's fire and as fuller's soap," but who may "abide the day of His coming?" (Mal 3:2). None but those whom He has created anew in Himself. All that is of our flesh shall be as stubble before Him, and we need not fear its destruction, for it will ever do wickedly. And bless His holy name, He will take care of the jewel, the precious *life* which He has implanted in the soul, while He deals thus roughly with our deeds of darkness. He is only bringing us to what we often talk about—to be nothing, that He may be all in all, and that we may glory in Him alone.

You say, how much of self you see working in your past life. You see truly, but you see not half of the abominations of this image that “provoketh to jealousy.” I have been here before you and I speak from experience, and though turned again and again to see greater abominations of self, which were to issue in the lifting up of “Jesus on high” in my soul, into which He came like the ark into Dagon’s temple (1Sa 5:4), when His powerful presence caused the hateful self which I had set up to fall prostrate and lose its head and feet, so that now it is good for nothing and can neither work nor walk, though it would often pretend. As said Delilah to Samson, “The Philistines be upon thee,” (Jud 16:20) so would I say to this marring, proud, hateful, self, “The power of Christ’s death be ever upon thee” (2Co 4:10). Nothing else will ever bring it down, and as the Holy Spirit first leads us through the “chambers of imagery” and reveals the hidden things of our own darkness, so does He afterwards reveal Christ and gives us *victory* through Him. The Holy Spirit breathes upon our fancied godliness (Isa 40:6-7) to make it wither, so is it that the beauty of the Lord our God (Psa 90:17) may be upon us, that we may understand those sweet words, “Ye are complete in him,” and that “he that glorieth may glory in the Lord.”

You complain that the Bible which you once enjoyed is now to you a sealed book. May not this be another answer to know, or to your desire to know, more of *yourself*? For you find that yourself may read the Word, quote the Word, and have some judgment and light in the Word, yet you cannot find the Word and eat it and make it the joy and rejoicing of your soul. Yourself cannot unlock the secrets contained therein, cannot receive “the sincere milk of the word, so that ye may grow thereby,” (1Pe 2:2) or eat the strong meats when you please. May you not hereby be learning that you are not ignorant in divine things and that Christ must be your wisdom?—that you are powerless and that He must be the power of God unto you for salvation and instruction in righteousness? May not the Holy Spirit be going forth in your soul like the voice of John in the wilderness, to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Mar 1:3, Isa 40:3) before Him, and to make straight in your seemingly desert heart a highway for our God? And may He not, ere long, say to you with almighty power, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?” (Joh 1:29). When by faith you behold Jesus as your Surety and Savior standing in your law-place, bearing your sin and guilt, and delivering your soul from punishment, by being Himself your ransom, then will your heart dissolve and tears of thankfulness flow. Having sweet forgiveness, you will love Him much and desire “to know no will but His.” “Old things will pass away and all things become new,” See 2Co 5:17 and you will become a new creature in a new world, whilst His gracious presence remains with you.

May it please the Lord that your painful exercise may end in this glorious issue. There are those now triumphing in Christ who have traveled mournfully through this wilderness of self before you and found it a land of darkness and drouth and shadow of death, and thought while in it that it was a land which none of the Lord’s living ones ever passed through. But He turned for them the shadows of death into morning. May He also do a sure work in your soul and give you feelingly to say, “Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isa 38:17).

Your letter made me weep well, knowing the bitterness of the “wormwood and gall.” “My soul hast thou still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.” I had hoped that the Lord was going to bring you forth to the light, that you might behold His righteousness. I have not come unto you with smooth things, but having spread yours before the Lord, who knoweth the end from the beginning (See Isa 46:10). Such as I have, give I unto thee. If He said it, may He bless it to your soul’s benefit, and He shall have the glory. If not, may my unworthy self be pardoned.

I remain, yours ever affectionately, ONE WHO HAS BEEN IN THE FURNACE, 1850.



# ASSURANCE

## Dialogue 1

The article which appeared in the last issue really completed our present treatment of this theme. It has since occurred to us though that perhaps some would be helped were we to further explain and amplify one or two of the leading points. Really, this ought not to be necessary, yet Scripture tells us that it is “line *upon* line” (Isa 28:10). Moreover, in view of the error which now so widely abounds and the confusion which beclouds so many minds, it is hardly to be expected that one can unlearn in a few hours what he has been mistakenly receiving as God’s truth for so many years. Doubtless not a few of our readers wish they had the opportunity for a personal conversation on the subject, so that they could state their difficulties and ask questions on anything that is not yet clear to them. We have therefore decided to write two further articles in the form of dialogues, introducing widely different characters, who express a desire to discuss the subject. The first is,

Mr. Carnal Confidence. “Good morning, Mr. Editor, I wish to have a talk with you about those articles on ‘Assurance’ which you published in last year’s ‘Studies.’ The Writer: “Be seated, please. First of all, may we courteously but frankly inform you that our time is already fully occupied in seeking to minister unto God’s dear children, yet we are never too busy to do all in our power to help a needy soul.” Carnal Confidence: “O I am not seeking help, my purpose in calling is to point out some things in your articles where I am quite sure you erred.” The Writer: “It is written, dear friend, ‘If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know’ (1Co 8:2), therefore I trust that God will ever give me grace to willingly consider and weigh the views of others and receive through them anything *He* may have for me. Yet, on the other hand, I am not prepared to *debate* with any man upon divine things.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “Well, I am quite sure that I am right and you are wrong, and I feel it my duty to tell you so.” The Writer: “Very good, I am ready to listen unto what you have to say, only reminding you again that I cannot enter into a debate with you, for the things of God are too holy to *argue* about, though a friendly discussion, in the right spirit, may prove mutually helpful. Before beginning, shall we seek the help of the Holy Spirit that He may graciously subdue the flesh in each of us, guide our conversation so that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be ‘acceptable’ in God’s sight (Psa 19:14), remembering that for every idle word each of us will yet have to give an account.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “I consider that in your articles you have made a very difficult and complicated matter out of what is really very simple. According to your ideas, a person has to go to a lot of trouble in order to discover whether or not he is saved, whereas if a man believes God’s Word he may be sure in a moment.” The Writer: “But are all those who believe God’s Word really *saved*? Did not the Jews of Christ’s day believe implicitly in the divine authorship of the



Old Testament? Do not Russellites and others today insist loudly upon their faith in the divine inspiration of the Bible? Does not the devil himself believe the same?" Mr. Carnal Confidence: "That is not what I meant. My meaning is that, if I rest upon some verse of Holy Writ as God's promise to me, then I know He cannot disappoint me." The Writer: "That is just the same in principle. Does not the Romanist rest with full confidence upon that declaration of Christ's, 'This is My body'? Saving faith is not faith in the authenticity of any verse of Scripture, but rather faith in the Person of Him who gave us the Scriptures, faith in the Christ who is made known in the Scriptures."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Yes, I know that, and I *do* believe in God and in His Son, and I *know* that I am saved because He says so." The Writer: "Where in Scripture does God say that *you* are saved?" Mr. Carnal Confidence: "In John 5:24, in Acts 16:31, and many other places." The Writer: "Let us turn to these passages please. In John 5:24, the Lord Jesus describes one who has 'passed from death unto life.' He tells us two things about that individual which serve to *identify* him. First, 'he that heareth my word.' That is definite enough. But of course it means far more than simply listening to His Word with the outward ear." Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Ah, right there you want to mystify what is simple, and perplex souls with what is quite clear." The Writer: "Pardon me, you are mistaken. I only wish to *rightly understand* the words God has used, and to do this it is necessary to carefully compare Scripture with Scripture and discover how each word is *used* by the Spirit." Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I object. That may be all right for you, but common people do not have the leisure for deep study. God knew this and has written His word in plain language that ordinary folks can understand. 'Hear' means 'hear,' and that is all there is to it."

The Writer: "I believe you are quite sincere in what you have said and you have expressed the view which a great many hold today, but if you will allow me to say so, it is a very defective one. God places no premium upon laziness. God has so ordered things that nothing is obtained without diligence and industry. Much work and care has to be devoted to a garden if anything is obtained from it. The same holds good every where else. What time and trouble is required in order to keep our bodies in working order! Can, then, the eternal concerns of our *souls* be more lightly dismissed or more easily secured? Has not God bidden us '*Buy the truth*' (Pro 23:23)? Has He not plainly told us, 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God' (Pro 2:3-5)?"

The Writer: "Mark *how* the Israelites were fed of old in the wilderness, Exodus 16. God did not provide them with baked loaves of bread ready to eat. No, instead, He gave them manna from heaven, which was 'a *small* round thing' (Exo 16:14). Work and patience were called for in order to 'gather' (Exo 16:17) it. Note too, 'When the sun waxed hot, it melted' (Exo 16:21), so that they had to get up early to secure it! Moreover, the manna would not keep, 'Let no man leave of it till the morning,' it 'bred worms and stank' (Exo 16:19-20) if they tried to preserve it for another day. Then, after it had been gathered, the manna had to be 'ground in mills or beaten in a mortar,' and baked in pans and made into cakes (Num 11:8). All of this typified the fact that if a soul is to eat the Bread of Life, he must devote himself in earnest and as Christ says, '*Labor...* for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life' (Joh 6:27)."

The Writer: "Thus it is in connection with the obtaining of a right understanding of any verse of Scripture. Pains have to be taken with it, patience has to be exercised, and prayerful study engaged in. Returning to John 5:24: The one who has passed from death unto life, says Christ, is he that '*heareth* My word.' Let us turn then to other passages where this term is found. 'They are

turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to *hear* my words' (Jer 11:10). 'Because ye have *not heard* my words, behold I will send and take all the families of the north' etc. (Jer 25:8-9). And see Jeremiah 35:17, Zechariah 1:4, Matthew 7:24, John 10:27. In all of these verses, and in many others which might be given, to 'hear' means to *heed* what God says, to *act upon* it, to *obey* Him. So he who 'hears' the voice of Christ *heeds* His command to turn away from all that is opposed to God and become in subjection to Him.

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "Well, let us turn to Acts 16:31, that is simple enough. There is no room allowed there for any quibbling. God says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' God says that *to me*. I have believed on Christ and so I must be saved." Writer: "Not so fast, dear friend. How can you prove God says that *to you*? Those words were spoken under unusual circumstances and to a particular individual. That individual had been brought to the end of himself. He was deeply convicted of his sins. He was in terrible anguish of soul. He had taken his place in the dust, for we are told that he 'came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas' (Act 16:29). Now is it fair to take the words of the apostles to *such* a man and apply them indiscriminately to anybody? Are we justified in ignoring the whole setting of that verse, wrenching it from its context, and giving it to those who have not any of the characteristics which marked the Philippian jailer?"

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I refuse to allow you to browbeat me and move me from the simplicity of the Gospel. John 3:16 says, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Now I *have* believed on the Son and therefore am fully assured that I possess eternal life." Writer: "Are you aware of the fact that in this same Gospel of John, we are told, 'Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them' (Joh 2:23-24)? There were many who 'believed' in Christ who were not saved by Him, see John 8:30 and note verse 59! John 12:42-43! There is a believing in Christ which saves and there is a believing in Him which does not save, and therefore it behooves every sincere and earnest soul to diligently examine *his* 'faith' by Scripture and ascertain *which* kind it is. There is too much at stake to take anything for granted. Where eternal destiny is involved surely no trouble can be too great for us to make sure."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I *am* sure, and no man can make me doubt." Writer: "Is your faith purifying your heart (Act 15:9)? Is it evidenced by those works which God requires (Jam 2:17)? Is it causing you to overcome the world (1Jo 5:4)?" Mr. Carnal Confidence: "O I don't claim to be perfect, but I *know* whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Writer: "We did not ask if you were perfect, but have you been made a new creature in Christ, have old things passed away, and all things become new (2Co 5:17)? Are you treading the path of obedience, for God's Word says, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him' (1Jo 2:4)."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I am not occupied with myself, but with Christ. I am not concerned about my walk, but with what He did for poor sinners." Writer: "To be 'occupied with Christ' is rather a vague expression. Are you occupied with His authority, have you surrendered to His Lordship, have you taken His yoke upon you, are you following the example which He has left His people? Christ cannot be *divided*. He is not only Priest to be trusted, but is also Prophet to be heeded, and King to be subject unto. Before He can be truly 'received,' the heart must be emptied of all those idols which stand in competition with Him. It is not the adulation of our lips, but the affection of our souls, which He requires. It is not an intellectual assent, but the heart's surrender to Him which saves."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “You are departing from the simplicity of the Gospel. You are making additions unto its one and only stipulation. There is nothing that God requires from the sinner except that he believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Writer: “You are mistaken. The Lord Jesus said, ‘*Repent ye, and believe the Gospel*’ (Mar 1:15).” Mr. Carnal Confidence: “That was *before* the cross, but in *this* dispensation repentance is not demanded.” Writer: “Then according to your ideas, God has changed the plan of salvation. But you err. *After* the cross, Christ charged His disciples, ‘That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations’ (Luk 24:47). If we turn to the book of Acts, we find that the apostles preached repentance in this dispensation. On the day of Pentecost, Peter bade the convicted Jews to ‘repent’ (Act 2:38). Reviewing his ministry at Ephesus, Paul declared that he had testified both to Jews and also to the Greeks ‘repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Act 20:21), while in Acts 17:30, we are told that God ‘now commandeth *all* men every where to *repent*.’”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “Then do you insist that if a person has not repented, he is still unsaved?” Writer: “Christ Himself says so, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish’ (Luk 13:5). So too if a man has not been converted, he is yet unsaved, ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out’ (Act 3:19). There must be a right-about-face. There must be a turning from Satan unto God, from the world unto Christ, from sin unto holiness. Where *that* has not taken place, all the believing in the world will save no one. Christ saves none who is still in love with sin, but He is ready to save those who are sick of sin, who long to be cleansed from its loathsome foulness, who yearn to be delivered from its tyrannizing power. Christ came here to save His people *from* their sins.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “You talk to me as though I were the helpless slave of strong drink or some other appetite, but I want you to know I was never the victim of any such thing.” Writer: “There are other lusts in fallen man besides those which break forth in gross outward sins, such as pride, covetousness, selfishness, self-righteousness, and unless they be mortified, they will take a man to hell as surely as will profanity, immorality, or murder. Nor is it enough to mortify these inordinate affections. The fruit of the Spirit, the graces of godliness, must also be brought forth in the heart and life, for it is written, ‘Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord’ (Heb 12:14). And therefore it is a pressing duty for each of us to heed the divine exhortation, ‘Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?’ (2Co 13:5).”

“Notice very carefully, dear friend, that the one point pressed upon the Corinthians was ‘that Jesus Christ is *in* you,’ and not their trusting that He died for them. Just as the Christian can only discover that his name was written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world, by discerning that God has written His laws in his heart (Heb 10:16), so I can ascertain that Christ *died for me* only by making sure that He now *lives in me*. And it is obvious that if the Holy One indwells me that His presence must have wrought a radical change both in character and in conduct. *This*, above everything else, is what we sought to make clear and emphasized in our articles on ‘Assurance,’ namely, the imperative necessity of our making sure that the Lord Jesus occupies the throne of our hearts, has the supreme place in our affections, and regulates the details of our lives. Unless *this* be the case with us, then our profession is vain and all our talk of trusting in Christ’s finished work is but idle words.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “I consider all you have said to be but the language of a Pharisee. You are occupied with your own fancied goodness and delighting in your own worthless righteousness.” Writer: “Pardon me, but I rather rejoice in what Christ’s Spirit has wrought in me

and pray that He will carry forward that work of grace to the glory of His name. But we must bring our discussion to a close. I would respectfully urge you to attend unto that exhortation addressed to all professing Christians, ‘Give diligence to make your calling and election sure’ (2Pe 1:10).” Mr. Carnal Confidence: “I shall do nothing of the sort. I *hate* the very word ‘election.’ I know that I am saved, though I do not measure up to the impossible standard you want to erect.” Writer: “Fare thee well. May it please the Lord to open your blind eyes, reveal to you His holiness, and bring you to His feet in godly fear and trembling.”

# February

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 2. The Personality of the Holy Spirit

If we were asked to state in a comprehensive form what constitutes (according to our views of Scripture) the blessedness of the Lord's people on earth, after His work of grace is begun in their souls, we would not hesitate to say that it must be wholly made up of the personal knowledge of and communion with the glorious Trinity in their persons in the Godhead. For as the church is chosen to be everlastingly holy and everlastingly happy, in uninterrupted communion with God in glory when this life is ended, the anticipation of it now by faith must form the purest source of all present joy. But this communion with God in the Trinity of His Persons cannot be enjoyed without a clear apprehension of Him. We must know under divine teaching God in the Trinity of His Persons and we must also know from the same source the special and personal acts of grace by which each glorious Person in the Godhead has condescended to make Himself known unto His people, before we can be said to personally enjoy communion with each and all.

We offer no apology, then, for devoting a separate article to the consideration of *the personality* of the Holy Spirit, for unless we have a right conception of His glorious being, it is impossible that we should entertain right thoughts about Him, and therefore impossible for us to render unto Him that homage, love, confidence, and submission which are His due. To the Christian who is given to realize that he owes to the personal operations of the Spirit every divine influence exercised upon him from the first moment of regeneration until the final consummation in glory, it cannot be a matter of little moment for him to aspire after the fullest apprehension of Him that his finite faculties are capable of. Yes, he will consider no effort too great to obtain spiritual views of Him whose divine grace and power the effectual means of his salvation through Christ are to be ascribed. To those who are strangers unto the operations of the blessed Spirit in the heart, the theme of this article is likely to be a matter of unconcern, and its details wearisome.

Some of our readers may be surprised to hear that there are men professing to be Christians who flatly deny the personality of the Spirit. We will not sully these pages by transcribing their blasphemies, but we will mention one detail to which appeal is made by the spiritual seducers, because some of our friends have possibly experienced a difficulty with it. In the second chapter of Acts, the Holy Spirit was said to be "poured out" (Act 2:18) and "shed abroad" see Act 2:33.

How could such terms be used of a Person? Very easily—that language is *figurative* and not literal. Literal it cannot be for that which is *spiritual* is incapable of being materially “poured out.” The figure is easily interpreted—as water “poured out” *descends*, so the Spirit has come from heaven to earth. As a “pouring” rain is a heavy one, so the Spirit is freely given in the plenitude of His gifts.

Having cleared up, we trust, what has given difficulty to some, the way is now open for us to set forth some of the positive evidence. Let us begin by pointing out that a “person” is an intelligent and voluntary entity, of whom personal properties may be truly predicated. A “person” is a living entity, endowed with understanding and will, being an intelligent and willing agent. Such is the Holy Spirit. All the elements which constitute personality are ascribed to and found in Him. “As the Father hath life in Himself, and the Son has life in Himself, so has the Holy Spirit, since He is the Author of natural and spiritual life to men, which He could not be unless He had life in Himself, and if He has life in Himself, He must subsist in Himself” (John Gill, 1616-1683).

1. Personal properties are predicated of the Spirit. He is endowed with *understanding* or wisdom, which is the first inseparable property of an intelligent agent, “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1Co 2:10). Now to “search” is an act of understanding and the Spirit is said to “search” because He “knoweth” (1Co 2:11). He is endowed with *will*, which is the most eminently distinguishing property of a person, “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing unto every man severally as he will” (1Co 12:11)—how utterly meaningless would be such language were the Spirit only an influence or energy! He *loves*, “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit” (Rom 15:30)—how absurd would it be to speak of the “love of the Spirit” if the Spirit were nought but an impersonal breath or abstract quality!

2. Passive personal properties are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, that is to say, He is the *object* of such actions of men as none but a person can be. “Ye have agreed together to *tempt* the Spirit of the Lord” (Act 5:9)—rightly did John Owen (1616-1683) say, “How can a quality, an accident, an emanation from God be tempted? None can possibly be so but he that hath an understanding to consider what is proposed unto him, and a will to determine upon the proposals made.” In like manner, Ananias is said to “*lie* to the Holy Spirit” (Act 5:3)—none can lie unto any other but such a one as is capable of hearing and receiving a testimony. In Ephesians 4:30, we are bidden not to “*grieve* the Holy Spirit”—how senseless would it be to talk about “grieving” an abstraction, like the law of gravity. Hebrews 10:29 warns us that He may be “done despite unto.”

3. Personal actions are attributed to Him. He *speaks*, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly” (1Ti 4:1). “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev 2:7). He *teaches*, “For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say” (Luk 12:12). “He shall teach you all things” (Joh 14:26). He *commands* or exercises authority. A striking proof of this is found in Acts 13:2, “The Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them”—how utterly misleading would such language be if the Spirit were not a real person! He *intercedes*, “The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:26)—as the intercession of Christ proves Him to be a person, and a distinct one from the Father unto whom He intercedes, so the intercession of the Spirit equally proves His personality, even His distinct personality.

4. Personal characters are ascribed to Him. Four times over, the Lord Jesus referred to the Spirit as “the Comforter,” and not merely as “comfort.” Inanimate things, such as clothes, may give us comfort, but only a living person can be a “comforter.” Again, He is the Witness, “Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us” (Heb 10:15). “The Spirit itself beareth witness

with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16)—the term is a forensic one, denoting the supplying of valid evidence of legal proof. Obviously, only an intelligent agent is capable of discharging such an office. He is justifier and sanctifier, “But ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit* of our God” (1Co 6:11).

5. Personal pronouns are used about Him. The word “pneuma” in the Greek, like “spirit” in the English, is neuter, nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is frequently spoken of in the masculine gender, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things” (Joh 14:26)—the personal pronoun could not, without violating grammar and propriety, be applied to any other but a person. Referring again to Him, Christ said, “If I depart, I will send *him* unto you” (Joh 16:7)—there is no other alternative than to regard the Holy Spirit as a Person or to be guilty of the frightful blasphemy of affirming that the Savior employed language which could only mislead His apostles and bring them into fearful error. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another* Comforter” (John 14:16)—no comparison would be possible between Christ (a Person) and an abstract influence.

Borrowing the language of the revered John Owen, we may surely say, “By all these testimonies, we have fully confirmed what was designed to be proved by them, namely, that the Holy Spirit is not a quality, as some speak, residing in the divine nature; not a mere emanation of virtue and power from God; not the acting of the power of God in and unto our sanctification, but a *holy, intelligent subsistent*, or person.” May it please the Eternal Spirit to add His blessings to the above, apply the same to our hearts, and make His adorable Person more real and precious to each of us. Amen.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 62. The Faith of Sarah (11:11-12)

In the verses which are now to be before us, the apostle calls attention to the marvelous power of a God-given faith to exercise itself in the presence of most discouraging circumstances, persevere in the face of the most formidable obstacles, and trust God to do that which unto human reason seemed utterly impossible. They show us that this faith was exercised by a frail and aged woman, who at first was hindered and opposed by the workings of unbelief, but who in the end relied upon the veracity of God and rested upon His promise. They show what an intensely practical thing faith is. That it not only lifts up the soul to heaven, but is able to draw down strength for the body on earth. They demonstrate what great endings sometimes issue from small beginnings, and that like a stone thrown into a lake produces ever-enlarging circles on the rippling waters, so faith issues in fruit which increases from generation to generation.

The more the 11th verse of our present chapter be pondered, the more evident will it appear the faith there spoken of is of a radically different order from that mental and theoretical faith of cozy-chair dreamers. The “faith” of the vast majority of professing Christians is as different from that described in Hebrews 11 as darkness is from light. The one ends in talk, the other was expressed in deeds. The one breaks down when put to the test, the other survived every trial to which it was exposed. The one is inoperative and ineffectual, the other was active and powerful.

The one is unproductive, the other issued into fruits to the glory of God. Ah, is it not evident that the great difference between them is, that one is merely human, the other divine, one merely natural, the other altogether supernatural? This it is which our hearts and consciences need to lay hold of and turn into earnest prayer.

That which has just been pointed out ought to deeply exercise both writer and reader. It ought to search us through and through, causing us to seriously and diligently weigh the character of our “faith.” It is of little use to be entertained by interesting articles, unless they lead to careful self-examination. It is of little profit to be made to wonder at the achievements of the faith of those Old Testaments saints, unless we are shamed by them and made to cry mightily unto God for Him to work in us a “like precious faith.” Unless our faith issues in works which mere nature cannot produce, unless it is enabling us to “overcome the world” (1Jo 5:4) and triumph over the lusts of the flesh, then we have grave cause to fear that our faith is not “the faith of God’s elect” (Ti 1:1). Cry with David, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2).

It is not that any Christian lives a life of perfect faith—only the Lord Jesus ever did that. No, for in the first place, like all the other spiritual graces, it is subject to growth (2Th 1:3) and full maturity is not reached in this life. In the second place, faith is not always in exercise, nor can we command its activities. He who bestowed it, must also renew it. In the third place, the faith of every saint falters at times. It did in Abraham, in Moses, in Elijah, in the apostles. The flesh is still in us and therefore the reasonings of unbelief are ever ready (unless divine grace subdue them) to oppose the actings of faith. We are not then urging the reader to search in himself for a faith that is perfect, either in its growth, its constancy, or its achievements. Rather are we to seek divine aid and make sure whether we have *any* faith which is superior to what has been acquired through religious education. Whether we have a faith which, despite the strugglings of unbelief, *does* trust the living God. Whether we have a faith which produces any fruit which manifestly issues from a spiritual root.

Having spoken of Abraham’s faith, the apostle now makes mention of Sarah’s. “Observe what a blessing it is when a husband and wife are both partners of faith, when both in the same yoke draw one way. Abraham is the father of the faithful and Sarah is recommended among believers as having a fellowship in the same promises and in the same troubles and trials. So it is said of Zachariah and Elizabeth, ‘And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless’ (Luk 1:6). It is a mighty encouragement when the constant companion of our lives is also a fellow in the same faith. This should direct us in the matter of choice. She cannot be a meet help that goeth a contrary way in religion. Religion decayeth in families by nothing so much as by want of care in matches” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

“Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised” (Heb 11:11). There are five things upon which our attention needs to be focused. First, the impediments of her faith. These were her barrenness, old age, and unbelief. Second, the effect of her faith. She “received strength to conceive.” Third, the constancy of her faith. She trusted God unto an actual



deliverance or birth of the child. Fourth, the foundation of her faith. She rested upon the veracity of the divine Promiser. Fifth, the fruit of her faith. The numerous posterity which issued from her son Isaac. Let us consider each of these separately.

“Through faith also Sarah herself.” The Greek is just the same here as in all the other verses and should have been rendered uniformly, “By faith” etc. The word “also” seems to be added for a double purpose. First to counteract and correct any error which might suppose that women were debarred the blessings and privileges of grace. It is true that in the official sphere, God has prohibited them from occupying the place of rule or usurping authority over the men, so that they are commanded to be silent in the churches (1Co 14:34), are not permitted to teach (1Ti 2:12), and are bidden to be in subjection to their husbands (Eph 5:22). But in the spiritual sphere all inequalities disappear, for “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28) and therefore the believing husband and the believing wife are “heirs together of the grace of life” (1Pe 3:7).

In the second place, this added “also” informs us that, though a woman, Sarah exercised the same faith as had Abraham. She had left Chaldea when he did, accompanied him to Canaan, dwelt with him in tents. Not only so, but she personally acted faith upon the living God. Necessarily so, for she was equally concerned in the divine revelation with Abraham, and was as much a party to the great difficulties of its accomplishment. The blessing of the promised seed was assigned to and appropriated by her, as much as to and by him, and therefore is she proposed unto the church as an example (1Pe 3:5-6). “As Abraham was the father of the faithful, or of the church, so she was the mother of it, so as that the distinct mention of her faith was necessary. She was the free woman from whence the church sprang, Galatians 4:22-23. And all believing women are her daughters, 1Pe 3:6” (John Owen).

“Through faith also Sarah herself received strength” (Heb 11:11). The word “herself” is emphatic. It was not her husband only, by whose faith she might receive the blessing, but by her own faith that she received strength, and this, notwithstanding the very real and formidable obstacles which stood in the way of her exercising it. These, as we have pointed out, were three in number. First, she had not borne any children during the customary years of pregnancy. As Genesis 11:30 informs us, “Sarai was barren.” “Now Sarai Abram’s wife bare him no children” (Gen 16:1). Second, she was long past the age of childbearing, for she was now “ninety years old” (Gen 17:17). Third, the workings of unbelief interposed, persuading her that it was altogether against nature and reason for a woman, under such circumstances, to give birth unto a child. This comes out in Genesis 18. There we read of three men appearing unto Abraham, one of whom was the Lord in theophanic manifestation. Unto him he said, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. Upon hearing this “Sarah laughed within herself” (Gen 18:12).

Sarah’s laughter was that of doubting and distrust, for she said “I am waxed old” (Gen 18:12). At once the Lord rebukes her unbelief, asking, “Is there anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son” (Gen 18:14). Solemn indeed is the sequel. “Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh” (Gen 18:15). It is always a shame to do amiss, but a greater shame to deny it. It was a sin to give way to unbelief, but it was adding iniquity unto iniquity to cover it with a lie. But we deceive ourselves if we think to impose upon God, for nothing can be concealed from His all-seeing eye. By comparing Hebrews 11:11 with what is recorded in Genesis 18, we learn that after the Lord had reproved Sarah’s unbelief and she began to realize that the promise came from God, her faith was called into exercise. Because her

laughter came from weakness and not from scorn, God smote her not, as He did Zacharias for his unbelief” (Luk 1:20).

Varied are the lessons which may be learned from the above incident. Many times the Word does not take effect immediately. It did not in Sarah’s case, though afterward she believed, at first she laughed. It was only when the divine promise was *repeated* that her faith began to act. Let preachers and Christian parents, who are discouraged by lack of success, lay this to heart. Again, see here that before faith is established often there is a conflict, Shall I have a child who am old?—reason opposed the promise. Just as when a fire is kindled the smoke is seen before the flame, so ere the heart rests upon the Word, there is generally doubting and fear. Once more, observe how graciously God hides the defects of His children. Nothing is said of Rahab’s lie (Heb 11:31), of Job’s impatience (Jam 5:11), nor here of Sarah’s laughing, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love” (Eph 5:1-2)!

Let us next consider what is here ascribed unto the faith of Sarah, “She received strength to conceive seed” (Heb 11:11). She obtained that which previously was not in her. There was now a restoration of her nature to perform its normal functions. Her dead womb was supernaturally vivified. In response to her faith, the Omnipotent One did for Sarah what He had done to Abraham in response to his trusting of Him, “(I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who *quickeneth* the dead” (Rom 4:17). “All things are possible with God.” Yes, and it is also true that “All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23): how blessedly and strikingly does the incident now before us illustrate this! O that it may speak unto each of our hearts and cause us to long after and pray for an increase of our faith. What is more glorifying to God than a confident looking unto Him to work in and through us that which mere nature cannot produce.

“By faith also Sarah herself received strength” (Heb 11:11). Christian reader, this is recorded both for thine instruction and encouragement. Faith worked a vigor in Sarah’s body where it was not before. Is it not written, “But they that wait upon the LORD shall *renew their strength*” (Isa 40:31)? Do we really believe this? Do we act as though we did? The writer can bear witness to the veracity of that promise. When he was in Australia, editing this magazine, keeping up with a heavy correspondence, and preaching five and six times each week, when it was over one hundred in the shade, many a time has he dragged his weary body into the pulpit, and then looked unto the Lord for a definite reinvigoration of body. Never did He fail us. After speaking for two hours, we generally felt fresher than we did when we arose at the beginning of the day. And why not? Has not God promised to “supply *all* our need”? Of how many is it true that “ye have not, because ye [in faith] ask not” (Jam 4:2).

Ah, dear reader, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that *now* is, and of that which is to come” (1Ti 4:8), “profitable” for the body, as well as for the soul. While we strongly reprobate much that is now going on under the name of “Faith-Healing,” yet we have as little patience with the pretended hyper-sanctity which disdains any looking unto God for the supply of our bodily needs. In this same chapter which we are now commenting upon, we read of others who “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb 11:34). Sad it is to see so many of God’s dear children living far beneath their privileges. True, many are under the chastening hand of God. But this should not be so. The cause should be sought, the wrong righted, the sin confessed, restoration both spiritual and temporal diligently sought.

We do not wish to convey the impression that the only application unto us of these words, “By faith also Sarah herself received strength” (Heb 11:11), has reference to the reviving of the

physical body, not so, though that is, undoubtedly, the first lesson to be learned. But there is a higher signification too. Many a Christian feels his spiritual weakness. That is well, yet instead of this hindering, it should bestir to lay hold of the Lord's strength (Isa 27:5). In the final analysis, it is nothing but lack of faith which so often allows the "flesh" to hinder us from bringing forth the Gospel-fruits of holiness. Despair not of personal frailty, but go forward in the strength of God, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph 6:10). Turn this into believing prayer for divine enablement. "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase" (Job 8:7).

Does the reader still say, "Ah, but such an experience is not for me. Alas, I am so unworthy, so helpless. I feel so lifeless and listless." So was Sarah! Yet, "by faith" she "received strength." And, dear friend, faith is not occupied with self, but with God. Abraham "considered not his own body" (Rom 4:19), nor did Sarah. Each of them looked away from self and counted upon God to work a miracle. And God did not fail them. He is pledged to honor those who honor Him and nothing honors Him more than a trustful expectation. He always responds to faith. There is no reason why you should remain weak and listless. True, without Christ, you can do nothing, but there is an infinite fullness in Him (Joh 1:16) for you to draw from. Then from this day onwards, let your attitude be, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phi 4:13). Apply to Him, count upon Him, "my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti 2:1).

"And was delivered of a child" (Heb 11:11). The "and" here connects what follows with each of the preceding verbs. It was "by faith" that Sarah "received strength," and it was also "by faith" that she was now "delivered of a child." It is the constancy and perseverance of her faith which is here intimated. There was no abortion, no miscarriage. She trusted God right through unto the end. This brings before us a subject upon which very little is written these days—the duty and privilege of Christian women counting upon God for a safe issue in the most trying and critical season in their lives. Faith is to be exercised not only in acts of worship, but in the ordinary offices of our daily affairs. We are to eat and drink in faith, work and sleep in faith, and the Christian wife should be delivered of her child by faith. The danger is great, and if in any extremity there is need of faith, much more so where life itself is involved. Let us seek to condense from the helpful comments of the Puritan Manton.

First, we must be sensible what *need* we have to exercise faith in this case, that we may not run upon danger blindfolded, and if we escape, then to think our deliverance a mere chance. Rachel died in this case, so also did the wife of Phinehas (1Sa 4:19-20). A great hazard is run and therefore you must be sensible of it. The more difficulty and danger be apprehended, the better the opportunity for the exercise of faith—2 Chronicles 20:12; 2 Corinthians 1:9. Second, because the sorrows of travail are a monument of God's displeasure against sin (Gen 3:16), therefore this must put you the more earnestly to seek an interest in Christ, that you may have remedy against sin. Third, meditate upon the promise of 1 Timothy 2:15, which is made good eternally or temporally as God sees fit. Fourth, the faith you exercise must be the glorifying of His power and submitting to His will. This expresses the kind of faith which is proper to all temporal mercies—Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst save me—it is sufficient to ease the heart of a great deal of trouble and perplexing fear.

"And was delivered of a child" (Heb 11:11). As we have pointed out in the last paragraph, this clause is added to show the continuance of Sarah's faith and the blessing of God upon her. True faith not only appropriates His promise, but continues resting on the same till that which is believed be actually accomplished. The principle of this is enunciated in Hebrews 3:14 and 10:36. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast *unto*

*the end,*” “Cast not away therefore your confidence.” It is at this point so many fail. They endeavor to lay hold of a divine promise, but in the interval of testing, let go of it. This is why Christ said, “If ye have faith, *and doubt not*, ye shall not only do this” etc. Matthew 21:21—“doubt not,” not only at the moment of pleading the promise, but during the time you are awaiting its fulfillment. Hence also, unto “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart” is added, “and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pro 3:5).

“When she was past age” (Heb 11:11). This clause is added so as to heighten the miracle which God so graciously wrought in response to Sarah’s faith. It magnifies the glory of His power. It is recorded for our encouragement. It shows us that no difficulty or hindrance should cause a disbelief of the promise. God is not tied down to the order of nature, nor limited by any secondary causes. He will turn nature upside down rather than not be as good as His Word. He has brought water out of a rock, made iron to float (2Ki 6:6), sustained two million people in a howling wilderness.

These things should arouse the Christian to wait upon God with full confidence in the face of the utmost emergency. Yea, the greater the impediments which confront us, faith should be increased.

The trustful heart says, Here is a fit occasion for faith. Now that all creature-streams have run dry is a grand opportunity for counting on God to show Himself strong on my behalf. What cannot He do! He made a woman of ninety to bear a child—a thing quite contrary to nature—so I may surely expect Him to work wonders for me too.

“Because she judged Him faithful who had promised” (Heb 11:11). Here is the secret of the whole thing. Here was the ground of Sarah’s confidence, the foundation on which faith rested. She did not look at God’s promises through the mist of interposing obstacles, but she viewed the difficulties and hindrances through the clear light of God’s promises. The act which is here ascribed unto Sarah is that she “judged” or reckoned, reputed and esteemed, God to be faithful. She was assured that He would make good His Word, on which He had caused her to hope. God had spoken. Sarah had heard. In spite of all that seemed to make it impossible that the promise should be fulfilled in her case, she steadfastly believed. Rightly did Luther say, “If you would trust God, you must learn to crucify the question *How*.” Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Th 5:24). This is sufficient for the heart to rest upon. Faith will cheerfully leave it with omniscience as to *how* the promise will be made good to us.

“Because she judged Him faithful who had promised” (Heb 11:11). Let it be carefully noted that Sarah’s faith went beyond the promise. While her mind dwelt upon *the thing* promised, it seemed unto her altogether incredible, but when she took her thoughts off all secondary causes and fixed them on God Himself, then the difficulties no longer disturbed her. Her heart was at rest in God. She knew that God could be depended upon. He is “faithful”—able, willing, sure to perform His Word. Sarah looked beyond the promise to the Promiser, and as she did so, all doubtings were stilled. She rested with full confidence on the immutability of Him that cannot lie, knowing that where divine veracity is engaged, omnipotence will make it good. It is by believing meditations upon the character of God that faith is fed and strengthened to expect the blessing, despite all apparent difficulties and supposed impossibilities. It is the heart’s contemplation of the perfections of God which causes faith to prevail. As this is of such vital practical importance, let us devote another paragraph to enlarging thereon.

To fix our minds on the *things* promised, to have an assured expectation of the enjoyment of them, without the heart first resting upon the veracity, immutability, and omnipotency of God, is but a deceiving imagination. Rightly did John Owen point out that, “The formal object of faith in

the divine promises is not the things promised in the first place, *but God Himself* in His essential excellencies, of truth, or faithfulness and power.” Nevertheless, the divine perfections do not, of themselves, work faith in us. It is only as the heart believingly ponders the divine attributes that we shall “judge” or conclude Him faithful that has promised. It is the man whose mind is stayed upon God Himself, who is kept in “perfect peace” (Isa 26:3). That is, he who joyfully contemplates who and what God is that will be preserved from doubting and wavering while waiting the fulfillment of the promise. As it was with Sarah, so it is with us, every promise of God has tacitly annexed to it this consideration, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD!” (Gen 18:14).

“Wherefore also from one was born, and that too of [one] having become dead, even as the stars of the heaven in multitude, and as the sand which [is] by the shore of the sea the countless” (Heb 11:12). We have quoted the rendering given in the Bagster Interlinear because it is more literal and accurate than our A.V. The “him” in the English translation is misleading, for in this verse there is no masculine pronoun. At the most, the “one” must refer to one couple, but personally we believe it points to one woman, Sarah, as the “born” (rather than the “begotten”) intimates. We regard the twelfth verse as setting forth the fruit of her faith, namely the numerous posterity which issued from her son, Isaac. The double reference to the “sand” and the “stars” calls attention to the twofold seed—the earthly and the heavenly, the natural and the spiritual Israel.

Like the “great multitude, which no man could number” of Revelation 7:9, so “as the stars of the sky for multitude and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable” (Heb 11:12). of our present verse, is obviously an hyperbole. It is figurative language and not to be understood literally. This may seem a bold and unwarrantable statement to some of our readers, yet if Scripture be compared with Scripture, no other conclusion is possible. The following passages make this clear—Deuteronomy 1:10; Joshua 11:4; Judges 7:12; 1 Samuel 13:5; 2 Samuel 17:11; 1 Kings 4:20. For other examples of this figure of speech see Deuteronomy 9:1; Psalm 78:27; Isaiah 60:22; John 21:25. Hyperboles are employed not to move us to believe untruths, but by emphasis, arrest our attention and cause us to heed weighty matters. The following rules are to be observed in the employment of them. First, they are to be used only of such things as are indeed true in the substance of them. Second, only of things which are worthy of more than ordinary consideration. Third, set out, as nearly as possible, in proverbial language. Fourth, expressed in words of similarity and dissimilarity, rather than by words of equality and inequality (William Gouge, 1575-1653).

But let our final thought be upon the rich recompense whereby God rewarded the faith of Sarah. The opening “Therefore” of verse 12 points the blessed consequence of her relying upon the faithfulness of God in the face of the utmost natural discouragements. From her faith, there issued Isaac and from him, ultimately, Christ Himself. And this is recorded for our instruction. Who can estimate the fruits of faith? Who can tell how many lives may be affected for good, even in generations yet to come, through your faith and my faith today! Oh how the thought of this should stir us up to cry more earnestly, “Lord, increase our faith” to the praise of the glory of Thy grace. Amen.

# THE LIFE OF DAVID

## 14. His Sparing of Saul

We began our last article by quoting, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” the remainder of the verse reading, “but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psa 34:19). This does not mean that God always rescues the afflicted one from the physical danger which menaces him. No indeed and we must be constantly on our guard against carnally interpreting the Holy Scriptures.

It is quite true that there are numerous cases recorded in the Word where the Lord was pleased to graciously put forth His power and extricate His people from situations where death immediately threatened them—the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea, Elijah from the murderous intentions of Ahab and Jezebel, Daniel from the lion’s den, being striking illustrations in point. Yet the slaying of Abel by Cain, the martyrdom of Zachariah (Mat 23:35), the stoning of Stephen, are examples to the contrary. Then did the promise of Psalm 34:19 fail in these latter instances? No indeed, they received a yet more glorious fulfillment, for they were finally delivered out of this world of sin and suffering.

David was the one whose hand was moved by the Holy Spirit to first pen Psalm 34:19 and signally was it fulfilled in his history in a physical sense. Few men’s lives have been more frequently placed in jeopardy than was his and few men have experienced the Lord’s delivering hand as he did. But there was a special reason for that and it is this to which we would now call attention. David was one of the progenitors of Israel’s Messiah and it is indeed striking and blessed to note the wonderful works of God of old in His miraculously preserving the chosen seed from which Christ, after the flesh, was to spring. Indeed it is this more particularly which supplies the key to many a divine interposition on behalf of the patriarchs and others, who were in the immediate line from which Jesus of Nazareth issued.

Strikingly does this appear in the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who for so many years dwelt in the midst of the Canaanites. The inhabitants of that land were heathen and most wicked, as Genesis 15:16 intimates. Abraham and his descendants were exposed to them as sojourners in the land and men are most apt to be irritated by the peculiar customs of strangers. It was, then, a most remarkable dispensation of providence which preserved the patriarchs in the midst of such a people, see Psalm 105:42. “Thus was this handful, this little root that had the blessing of the Redeemer in it, preserved in the midst of enemies and dangers, which was not unlike to the preserving of the Ark in the midst of the tempestuous deluge” (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758). Wondrously too did God preserve the infant nation of Israel in Egypt in the wilderness and on their first entering the promised land.

Still more arresting is the illustration which this principle receives in the divine preserving of the life of him who was more immediately and illustriously the sire of Christ. How often was

there but a step betwixt David and death! His encountering of the lion and bear in the days of his shepherd life, without divine intervention, could have rent him in pieces as easily as they caught a lamb from his flock. His facing Goliath, who was powerful enough to break him across his knee and give his flesh to the beasts of the field as he threatened. The exposing of his life to the Philistines, when Saul required one hundred of their foreskins as a dowry for his daughter. The repeated assaults of the king by throwing his javelin at him. The later attempts made to capture and slay him—yet from all these was David delivered. “Thus was the precious seed that virtually contained the Redeemer and all the blessings of redemption, wondrously preserved, when all earth and hell were conspired against it to destroy it” (Jonathan Edwards).

But we must now turn to our present lesson, a lesson which records one of the most striking events in the eventful life of David. Well did Matthew Henry (1662-1714) point out, “We have hitherto had Saul seeking an opportunity to destroy David, and to his shame, he could never find it. In this chapter, David had a fair opportunity to destroy Saul and to his honor, he did not make use of it, and his sparing Saul’s life was as great an instance of God’s *grace* in him, as the preserving of his own life was of God’s *providence* over him.” Most maliciously had Saul sought David’s life, most generously did David spare Saul’s life. It was a glorious triumph of the spirit over the flesh, of grace over sin.

“And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi” (1Sa 24:1). From these words, we gather that Saul had been successful in turning back the invading Philistines. This illustrates a solemn principle which is often lost sight of—human success is no proof of divine approbation. The mere fact that a man is prospering outwardly, does not, of itself, demonstrate that his life is pleasing unto the Lord. No one but an infidel would deny that it was *God* who enabled Saul to clear his land of the Philistines, yet we err seriously if we conclude from this that He delighted in him. As oxen are fattened for the slaughter, so God often ripens the wicked for judgment and damnation by an abundance of His temporal mercies. The immediate sequel shows clearly what Saul still was.

“And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi” (1Sa 24:1). This may be regarded as a testing of Saul, for every thing that happens in each of our lives tests us at some point or other. Miserably did Saul fail under it. Nothing in the outward dispensations of God changes the heart of man. His chastisements do not break the stubborn will, nor His mercies melt the hard heart. Nothing short of the regenerating work of the Spirit can make any man a new creature in Jesus Christ. The success with which God had just favored his military enterprise against the Philistines made no impression upon the reprobate soul of the apostate king. Pause for a moment, dear reader, and face this question, Has the goodness of God brought *you* to repentance?

“Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats” (1Sa 24:2). What a terribly solemn illustration does this verse supply of what is said in Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is *fully* set in them to do evil.” Wicked men are often interrupted in their evil courses, yet they return unto them when the restraint is removed, as if deliverance from trouble were only given that they should add iniquity to iniquity. It was thus with Pharaoh. Time after time God sent a plague which stayed that vile monarch’s hand, yet as soon as respite was granted, he hardened his heart again. So Saul had been providentially blocked while pursuing David by the invading Philistines, but now, as soon as the hindrance was removed, he redoubled his evil efforts. O unsaved reader, has it not been thus with

you? Your course of self-pleasing was suddenly checked by an illness, your round of pleasure-seeking was stopped by a sick-bed. Opportunity was given for you to consider the interests of your immortal soul, to humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God. Perhaps you did so in a superficial way, but what has been the sequel? Health and strength have been mercifully restored by God, but are they being used for His glory, or are you now vainly pursuing the phantoms of this world harder than ever?

Ought not the very invasion of the Philistines to have changed Saul's attitude toward the one whom he was so causelessly and relentlessly pursuing? Ought he not to have realized how more forcibly than ever, that he needed David at the head of his army to repulse the common enemy? And O unsaved reader, is not the case very much the same with thee? The faithful servant of God, who has your best interests at heart, you despise. That Christian friend who begs you to consider the claims of Christ, the solemnities of an unending eternity, the certain and terrible doom of those who live only for this life, you regard as a "killjoy." Saul is now in the torments of hell and in a short time at most *you* will be there too, unless you change your course and beg God to change your heart.

Let us turn our thoughts once more unto David. As we saw at the close of our last article, in answer to believing prayer, God granted him a striking deliverance from the hand of his enemy. Yet that deliverance was but a brief one. Saul now advanced against him with a stronger force than before. Does not every real Christian know something of this in his own spiritual experience? It is written that "we must through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Act 14:22). Troubles come and then a respite is granted, and then new troubles follow on the heels of the old ones. Our spiritual enemies will not leave us in peace very long, nevertheless, they are a blessing in disguise if they drive us to our knees. Very few souls thrive as well in times of prosperity as they do in seasons of adversity. Winters' frosts may necessitate warmer clothes, but they also kill the flies and garden pests.

David had now betaken himself unto "the rocks of the wild goats" (1Sa 24:2). Thither Saul and his large army follow him. Once more God undertook for him and that in a striking way. "And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave" (1Sa 24:3). In that section of Palestine there are large caves, partly so by nature, partly so by human labor, for the sheltering of sheep from the heat of the sun. Hence we read in the Song of Solomon 1:7 of "where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon." In one of these spacious caverns, David, and some of his men at least, had taken refuge. Thither did Saul, separated apparently from his men, now turn in order to seek repose. Thus, by a strange carelessness (viewed from the human standpoint), Saul placed himself completely at David's mercy.

"And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee" (1Sa 24:4). David's men at once saw the hand of the Lord in this unexpected turn of events. So far, so good. None but an infidel believes in things happening by chance, though there are many infidels wearing the name of "Christian." There are no accidents in a world which is governed by the living God, for "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom 11:36). Therefore does faith perceive the hand of God in every thing which enters our lives, be it great or small. And it is only as we recognize His hand molding all our circumstances that God is honored and our hearts are kept in peace. O for grace to say at all times, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good" (1Sa 3:18).



“And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee” (1Sa 24:4). It is not difficult to trace the line of thought which was in their minds. They felt that here was an opportunity too good to be missed, an opportunity which providence itself had obviously placed in David’s way. One stroke of the sword would rid him of the only man that stood between him and the throne. Not only so, but the slaying of this apostate Saul would probably mean the bringing back of the whole nation unto the Lord. How many there are in Christendom today who believe that the end justifies the means—to get “results” is the all-important thing with them—*how* this is done matters little or nothing. Had such men been present to counsel David they had argued, Be not scrupulous about slaying Saul, see how much good it will issue in!

“What a critical moment it was in David’s history! Had he listened to the specious counselors who urged upon him to do what providence, seemingly, had put in his way, his life of faith would have come to an abrupt end. One stroke of his sword and he steps into a throne! Farewell poverty! Farewell the life of a hunted goat. Reproaches, sneers, defeat, would cease. Adulations, triumphs, riches would be his. But his at the sacrifice of faith, at the sacrifice of a humbled will, ever waiting on God’s time, at the sacrifice of a thousand precious experiences of God’s care, God’s provision, God’s guidance, God’s tenderness. No, even a throne at that price is too dear. Faith will wait” (C. H. Bright).

But there is a deeper lesson taught here, which every Christian does well to take thoroughly to heart. It is this—we need to be exceedingly cautious *how we interpret* the events of providence and what conclusions we draw from them, lest we mistake the opportunity of following out our own inclinations for God’s approbation of our conduct. God had promised David the throne, had His time now come for removing the one obstacle which stood in his way? It looked very much like it. Saul had shown no mercy and there was not the least likelihood that he would do so. Then was it God’s will that David should be His instrument for taking vengeance upon him? It seemed so or why should He have delivered him into his hand? David had cried to God for deliverance and had appealed unto divine justice for vindication (Psa 54:1), had the hour now arrived for his supplication to be answered? The unexpected sight of Saul asleep at his feet, made this more than likely. How easy, how very easy then, for David to have made an erroneous deduction from the event of providence on this occasion!

God was, in reality, *testing* David’s faith, testing his patience, testing his piety. The testing of his faith lay in submission to the Word, which plainly says, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13), and God had given him no exceptional command to the contrary. The testing of his patience lay in his quietly waiting God’s time to ascend the throne of Israel. The temptation before him was to take things into his own hands and rush matters. The testing of his piety lay in the mortifying of his natural desires to avenge himself, to act in grace, and show kindness to one who had sorely mistreated him. It was indeed a very real testing and blessed is it to see how the spirit triumphed over the flesh.

The application of this incident to the daily life of the Christian is of great practical importance. Frequently God tests *us* in similar ways. He so orders His providences as to try our hearts and make manifest what is in them. How often we are exercised about some important matter, some critical step in life, some change in our affairs involving momentous issues. We distrust our own wisdom, we want to be sure of God’s will in the matter, we spread our case before the throne of grace, and ask for light and guidance. So far, so good. Then, usually, comes the testing. Events transpire which seem to show that it *is* God’s will for us to take a certain step,

things appear to point plainly in that direction. Ah, my friend, that may only be God trying your heart. If, notwithstanding your praying over it, your *desires* are really set upon that object or course, then it will be a very simple thing for you to misinterpret the events of providence and jump to a wrong conclusion.

An accurate knowledge of God's Word, a holy state of heart (wherein self is judged and its natural longings mortified), a broken will, are absolutely essential in order to clearly discern the path of duty in important cases and crises. The safest plan is to *deny* all suggestions of revenge, covetousness, ambition, and impatience. A heart that is established in true godliness will rather interpret the dispensations of providence as trials of faith and patience, as occasions to practice self-denial, than as opportunities for self-indulgence. In any case, "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa 28:16). "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass...Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him" (Psa 37:5, 7). O for grace to do so, but such grace has to be definitely, diligently, and daily sought for.

## COMING TO CHRIST

### Part 2

There are some souls greatly distressed and puzzled to know exactly what is signified by "coming to Christ." They have read and heard the words often and perhaps many a preacher has bidden them to "come to Him," yet without giving a scriptural explanation of what that term connotes. Such as have been awakened by the Spirit, shown their woeful condition, convicted of their high-handed and life-long rebellion against God, and brought to realize their dire need of Christ, and who are truly anxious to come savingly to Him, have found it a task altogether beyond their powers. Their cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" (Job 23:3). True, there are not many who pass through such an experience, for *God's* "flock" is but a "little" one (Luk 12:32). True, the vast majority of professing Christians claim that *they* found "coming to Christ" a very simple matter. But in the clear light of John 6:44, we must assure you, dear reader, that if *you* found "coming to Christ" to be easy, then it is proof you have *never* come to Him at all in a spiritual and saving way.

What, then, is meant by "coming to Christ"? First, and negatively, let it be pointed out that it is *not* an act which we perform by any of our bodily members. This is so obvious that there should be no need for us to make the statement. But in these awful days of spiritual ignorance and the carnal perversion of the holy things of God, explanation of the most elementary truths and terms is really required. When so many precious souls have been deluded into thinking that a going forward to a "mourner's bench" or "penitent form," or the taking of some preacher's hand, is the same things as coming to Christ, we dare not pass over the defining of this apparently simple term, nor ignore the need for pointing out what it does not signify.

Second, the word "come," when used in this connection, is a *metaphorical* one. That is to say, a word which expresses an act of the body is transferred to the soul to denote its act. To "come to

Christ” signifies the movement of a Spirit-enlightened mind toward the Lord Jesus—as Prophet, to be instructed by Him, as Priest, whose atonement and intercession are to be relied upon, as King, to be ruled by Him. Coming to Christ implies a turning of our back upon the world and a turning unto Him as our only hope and portion. It is a going out of self so as to rest no longer on anything in self. It is the abandoning of every idol and of all other dependencies, the heart going out to Him in loving submission and trustful confidence. It is the will surrendering to Him as Lord, ready to accept His yoke, take up the cross, and follow Him without reserve.

To “come to Christ” is the turning of the whole soul unto a whole Christ in the exercise of divine grace upon him. It is the mind, heart, and will being supernaturally drawn to Him, so as to trust, love, and serve Him. “It is the duty and interest of weary and heavy-laden sinners to ‘come to Jesus Christ’—renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to Him or in competition with Him. We must accept Him as our Physician and Advocate and give up ourselves to His conduct and government, freely willing to be saved by Him, in His own way, and on His own terms” (Matthew Henry). Ere proceeding further, we would earnestly beg each reader to prayerfully and carefully test and measure himself or herself by what has been said in this and the preceding paragraph. Take nothing for granted. As you value your soul, seek divine help to make sure that you have truly “come to Christ.”

Now a popish “christ” is a christ of *wood* and a false preacher’s “christ” is a christ of *words*, but Christ Jesus our Lord is “the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). The Christ of God fills heaven and earth. He is the One by whom all things exist and consist. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, having all power, dominion, and might. He is made higher than the heavens and unto Him all principalities and powers are subject. At His presence both the earth and the heavens shall yet flee away. Such a Christ is neither to be offered nor proffered, sold nor given by sinful men. He is the unspeakable gift of the Father to as many as He has ordained to eternal life, and none others. This Christ, this gift of the Father, is supernaturally revealed and applied to the heirs of salvation by the Holy Spirit, when, where, and as He pleases, and not when, where, and how men please.

In the preceding article, we dwelt at length upon those words of Christ in John 6:44, “No man can come unto me,” seeking to show the nature of the fallen creature’s spiritual impotency or why it is the unregenerate are unable to come to Christ in a spiritual and saving way. Let us now ponder the remainder of our Lord’s sentence, “Except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” Of what does that “drawing” consist? We answer, first, just as our “coming to Christ” does not refer to any bodily action, so this divine “drawing” respects not the employment of any external force. Second, it signifies a powerful impulse put forth by the Holy Spirit within the elect, whereby their native impotency for performing spiritual actions is overcome and an ability for the same is imparted. It is this secret and effectual operation of the Spirit upon the human soul which enables and causes it to come to Christ. This brings us to our next division,

## II. With our Understandings.

1. *A knowledge of Christ is essential.* There can be no movement towards an unknown object. No one can obey a command until he is acquainted with its terms. A prop must be seen before it will be rested on. We must have some acquaintance with a person before he will either be trusted or loved. This principle is so obvious it needs arguing no further. Apply it unto the case in hand, the subject before us. The knowledge of Christ must of necessity precede our believing on Him or our coming to Him. “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Rom 10:14). “He that cometh to God *must* believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently

seek him” (Heb 11:6). None can come to Christ while they are ignorant about Him. As it was in the old creation, so it is in the new. God first says, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3).

2. *This knowledge of Christ comes to the mind from the Holy Scriptures.* Nothing can be known of Him save that which God has been pleased to reveal concerning Him in the Word of truth. It is there alone that the true “doctrine of Christ” (2Jo 1:9) is to be found. Therefore did our Lord give commandment, “Search the Scriptures...they are they which testify of me” (Joh 5:39). When He berated the two disciples for their slowness of heart to believe, we are told that, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luk 24:27). The divine oracles are designated “the word of Christ” (Col 3:16) because He is the substance of them. Where the Scriptures have not gone, Christ is unknown. Clear proof is this that an acquaintance with Him cannot be gained apart from their inspired testimony.

3. *A theoretical knowledge of Christ is not sufficient.* Upon this point we must dilate at greater length, for much ignorance concerning it prevails today. A head-knowledge about Christ is very frequently mistaken for a heart-acquaintance with Him. But orthodoxy is not salvation. A carnal judgment about Christ, a mere intellectual knowledge of Him, will never bring a dead sinner to His feet. There must be a living experience—God’s Word and work meeting together in the soul, renewing the understanding. As 1 Corinthians 13:2 so plainly and solemnly warns us, I may have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, yet if I have not love, then I am nothing. Just as a blind man may, through labor and diligence, acquire an accurate theoretical or notional conception of many subjects and objects which he never saw, so the natural man may, by religious education and personal effort, obtain a sound doctrinal knowledge of the person and work of Christ, without having any spiritual or vital acquaintance with Him.

*Not every kind of knowledge, even of God’s truth and His Christ, is effectual and saving.* There is a *form* of knowledge, as well as of godliness, which is destitute of power—“which hath the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law” (Rom 2:20). The reference is to the Jews, who were instructed in the Scriptures, and considered themselves well qualified to teach others. Yet the truth had not been written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. A “*form* of knowledge” signifies there was a model of it in their brains, so that they were able to discourse freely and fluently upon the things of God, yet were they without the life of God in their souls. O how many have a knowledge *of* salvation, yet not a knowledge *unto* salvation, as the apostle distinguishes it in 2 Timothy 3:15—such a knowledge as the latter must be imparted to the soul by the miracle-working operation of the Holy Spirit.

“They proceed from evil to evil, and *they know not me*, saith the LORD” (Jer 9:3). Of whom was this spoken—of the heathen who were without any written revelation from Him? No, of Israel, who had His law in their hands, His temple in their midst, His prophets speaking to them. They had been favored with many and wondrous manifestations of His majesty, holiness, power, and mercy, yet though they had much intellectual knowledge of Him, they were strangers to Him spiritually. So it was when the Son of God became incarnate. How much *natural* light they had concerning Him. They witnessed His perfect life, saw His wondrous miracles, heard His matchless teaching, were frequently in His immediate presence, yet, though the light shown in the darkness, “the darkness comprehended it not” (Joh 1:5). So it is today. Reader, you may be a diligent student of the New Testament, be thoroughly acquainted with the Old Testament types and prophecies, believe all that the Scriptures say concerning Christ, and earnestly teach them to others, and yet be yourself a stranger to Him spiritually.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3), which means that the unregenerate are utterly incapable of discerning the things of God spiritually. True, they may “see” them in a natural way. They may investigate and even admire them theoretically, but to receive them in an experimental and vital way they cannot. As this distinction is of such great importance, and yet so little known today, let us endeavor to illustrate it. Suppose a man who had never heard any music. Others tell him of its beauty and charm, and he decides to make a careful study of it. That man might thoroughly familiarize himself with the art of music, learn all the rules of that art, so that he understood the proportions and harmony of it; but what a different thing is that from listening to a grand oratorio—the ear now taking in what before the mind knew only the theory of! Still greater is the difference between a natural and spiritual knowledge of divine things.

The apostle declared, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery” (1Co 2:7). He did not only affirm that it is a mystery in itself, but that it is still spoken “*in* a mystery.” And why is this? Because the unregenerate, even where it is spoken in their hearing, yea, when it is clearly apprehended by them in a notional way, yet they neither know nor apprehend the mystery that is still in it. Proverbs 9:10 declares, “the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” There is no true understanding of divine things except the “knowledge of the holy.” Every real Christian has a knowledge of divine things, a personal, experimental, vital knowledge of them, which no carnal man possesses or can obtain, no matter how diligently he study them. If I have seen the picture of a man, I have an image in my mind of that man according to his picture, but if I see the man himself, how different is the image of him which is then formed in my mind! Far greater still is the difference between Christ made known in the Scriptures and Christ revealed *in* me (Gal 1:16).

4. *There must be a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of Christ imparted by the Holy Spirit.* That is in view in 1 John 5:20, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath *given us an understanding*, that we may know him that is true.” The faculty must be suited to the object or subject known. The natural understanding is capable of taking in Christ and knowing Him in a natural way, but we must be “renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph 4:23) before we can know Christ in a spiritual way. There must be a supernatural work of grace wrought upon the mind by the Holy Spirit before there can be any inward and spiritual apprehension of the supernatural and spiritual person of Christ. That is the true and saving knowledge of Christ which fires the affections, sanctifies the will, and raises up the mind to a spiritual fixation on the Rock of Ages. It is *this* knowledge of Him which is “life eternal” (Joh 17:3). It is *this* knowledge which produces faith in Christ, love for Him, submission to Him. It is *this* knowledge which causes the soul to truthfully and joyously exclaim, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25).

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). It is by the secret and effectual operation of the Spirit that the Father brings each of his elect to a saving knowledge of Christ. These operations of the Spirit begin by his enlightening the understanding, renewing the mind. Observe carefully the order in Ezekiel 37:14, “And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live...*then* shall ye *know* that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.” No sinner ever comes to Christ until the Holy Spirit first comes to him! And no sinner will savingly believe on Christ until the Spirit has communicated faith to him (Eph 2:8; Col 2:12), and even then faith is an eye to *discern* Christ before it is a foot to *approach* Him. There can be no act without an object and there can be no exercising of faith upon Christ till Christ is seen in His excellency, sufficiency, and suitability to poor sinners. “That ye may know *and* believe me” (Isa 43:10) is the order. “And they that *know* thy name will [not “ought to”] put their trust in thee”

(Psa 9:10). But again, we say, that knowledge must be a spiritual and miraculous one imparted by the Spirit.

The Spirit Himself, and not merely a preacher, must take of the things of Christ and show them unto the heart. It is only in *God's* "light" that we truly "*see* light" (Psa 36:9). The opening of his eyes precedes the conversion of the sinner from Satan unto God (Act 26:18). The light of the sun is seen breaking out at the dawn of day, before its heat is felt. It is those who "see" the Son with a supernaturally enlightened understanding that "believe" on Him with a spiritual and saving faith (Joh 6:40). We *behold* as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, before we are *changed* into His very image (2Co 3:18). Note the order in Romans 3:11, "There is none that understandeth" goes before "there is none that seeketh after God." The Spirit must shed His light upon the understanding, which light conveys the actual image of spiritual things in a spiritual way to the mind, forming them on the soul, much as a sensitive photographic plate receives from the light the images to which it is exposed. *This* is the "*demonstration* of the Spirit and of power" (1Co 2:4).

5. *How is this spiritual and vital knowledge to be known from a mere theoretical and notional one?* By its effects. Unto the Thessalonians Paul wrote, "For our Gospel came not unto you in *word only*, but *also in power*, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (1Th 1:5), which is partly explained in the next verse, "having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit had given that Word an efficacy which no logic, rhetoric, or persuasive power of men could. It had smitten the conscience, torn open the wounds which sin had made, exposed its festering sores. It had pierced them even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. It had slain their good opinion of themselves. It had made them feel the wrath of God burning against them. It had caused them to seriously question if such wretches could possibly find mercy at the hands of a holy God. It had communicated faith to look upon the great Physician of souls. It had given a joy such as this poor world knows nothing of.

The light which the Spirit imparts to the understanding is full of efficacy, whereas that which men acquire through their study is not so. Ordinary and strong mineral water are alike in color, but differ much in their taste and virtue. A carnal man may acquire a theoretical knowledge of all that a spiritual man knows vitally, yet is he barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2Pe 1:8). The light that he has is ineffectual, for it neither purifies his heart, renews his will, nor transforms his life. The head-knowledge of divine truth, which is all that multitudes of present-day professing Christians possess, has no more influence upon their walk unto practical godliness, than though it was stored up in some other man's brains. The light which the Spirit gives, humbles and abases its recipient. The knowledge which is acquired by education and personal efforts, puffs up and fills with conceit.

A spiritual and saving knowledge of Christ always constrains the soul unto loving obedience. No sooner did the light of Christ shine into Paul's heart, than he at once asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Act 9:6). Of the Colossians, the apostle declared, "...the gospel; which is come unto you...bringeth forth fruit...since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" [or "in reality"] (Col 1:5-6). But a mere intellectual knowledge of the truth is held in *unrighteousness* (Rom 1:18). Its possessors are zealous to argue and cavil about it, and look down with contempt upon all who are not so wise as they, yet the *lives* of these frequently put them to shame. A saving knowledge of Christ so endears Him to the soul that all else is esteemed as dung in comparison with His excellency. The light of His glory has cast a complete eclipse over all that is in the world. But a mere doctrinal knowledge of Christ produces no such effects. While its

possessors may loudly sing His praises, yet their hearts are still coveting and eagerly pursuing the things of time and sense.

The natural man may know the truth of the things of God, but not the things themselves. He may thoroughly understand the Scriptures in the letter of them, but not in their spirit. He may discourse of them in a sound and orthodox manner, but in no other way than one can *talk of* honey and vinegar, who never tasted the sweetness of the one, nor the sourness of the other. There are hundreds of preachers who have accurate notions of spiritual things, but who see and taste not the things themselves which are wrapt in the words of truth, "understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1Ti 1:7). Just as an astronomer who makes a life-study of the stars, knows their names, positions, and varying magnitudes, yet receives no more personal and special influence from them than do other men, so it is with those who study the Scriptures, but are not supernaturally and savingly enlightened by the Spirit. O my reader, has the Day-Star arisen *in your heart* (2Pe 1:19)?

(D. V. To be continued.)

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 1. The Promises of God (Concluded)

In view of the confusion which now exists in so many minds, a second article upon this aspect of our subject seems called for. One leading branch of Satan's evil work is to torment the children of God, and as far as he can, destroy their peace. Full well he knows that he cannot prevent them entering their eternal rest (which is evident by his admission in Job 1:10), therefore does he bend his efforts toward undermining their present spiritual comforts. And to a large extent his end is gained in this if he succeeds in weakening or removing our confidence in the precious promises of God, which form a considerable part of the source and substance of the saints' consolation. Knowing that he is unable to shake the faith of the regenerate in the divine inspiration and veracity of the promises recorded in Holy Writ, he has employed the subtler attack (which is equally effective if yielded to) of seeking to persuade us that the great majority of God's promises do not belong unto Christians at all, for, seeing they are recorded in the Old Testament they are the property of the Jews only.

Cleverly indeed has the devil pushed this campaign of enervating the importance and value of the larger half of God's Word. The agents whom he has employed in this evil work have not been open atheists and avowed infidels, but instead, men who posed as the champions of orthodoxy, acknowledging their faith in the full inspiration of the Scriptures. Thereby the confidence of the unwary was gained. Though at first, the radical and revolutionary postulates of the teachers of "dispensational truth" may have awakened a measure of uneasiness in simple-minded souls, only too often they quenched their fears by reassuring themselves that such teachers—so faithful to the "fundamentals," so loyal to Christ, so well-versed in the Scriptures—"must be right." Moreover, the claims made by these men that God had given them much more "light" on His Word than all

who had preceded them, made an attractive appeal to the pride of their hearers—for who wants to be “behind the times”?

In Jeremiah 36:23, we are told that when Jehoiakim, king of Judah, heard the prophet read a message from God, that “he cut it with the penknife.” This incident has often been referred to by teachers of “dispensational truth,” who have applied or accommodated it to the pernicious methods employed by the “higher critics.” This too has served to quieten any fears that might exist in the hearer, for supposing that his teachers “stood for the whole Word of God,” and impressed by their fervent denunciations of “modernism” and “evolutionism,” he thinks that they are to be safely followed in all their assertions. How wily the devil is! Nevertheless, the fact remains that *in the effects produced*, the labors of the “dispensationalists” have been as subversive of faith as those of the “higher critics.” The latter affirming much of the Old Testament to be spurious, the former insisting that it belongs not unto us. In either case, the greater part of God’s Word is reduced to a dead letter, so far as faith’s receiving of its present validity and virtue is concerned.

But are there not many promises which God gave unto Israel which have no direct application unto the church? Are there not many promises recorded in the Old Testament which Christians of today could by no means appropriate to themselves and rightly expect their fulfillment? Of course not! Were *that* the case, then Romans 15:4 would not be true, “For *whatsoever* things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” What “comfort” can I draw from Scriptures which “do not belong to me”? What “hope” can possibly be inspired in the Christian today by promises which pertain to none but the Jews? Christ came here not to cancel, but “to *confirm* the promises made unto the fathers: *and* that the *Gentiles* might glorify God for his mercy” (Rom. 15:8-9).

Now with regard to all the divine promises which respect temporal or material blessings, the following rules must be steadily borne in mind when pleading for their fulfillment. First, there must be the heart’s entire *submission to the absolute sovereignty of God*. Such general promises as, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive them” (Mat 21:22), must always be understood in the light of, “If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1Jo 5:14). The fulfillment of His promises must necessarily be subordinated unto God’s own good pleasure. By this we do not mean that God ever fails to make good any word that He has given, but rather that He has so worded His promises, or so modified them by other declarations, that He is free to exercise His high sovereignty *in* the fulfilling of them, *without* in the slightest degree sully His veracity.

To be more specific—God exercises His sovereignty in the fulfillment of His promises in a threefold way—as unto whom He makes them good, as to how, and as to when He does so. Let us illustrate this by Psalm 34:7, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and *delivereth* them.” First, as to *whom* He makes this good unto. Note the *indefiniteness* of the promise. It does *not* say, “all that fear him.” The three Hebrews were “delivered” from Babylon’s furnace, but others “were stoned” and sawn asunder” (Heb 11:36-37). Second, as to *how*—Daniel was delivered from the lions’ den. Stephen, at his death, was “delivered” from a world of sin and sorrow and removed to heaven! Third, as to *when*—godly Josiah was “delivered” from this scene of wickedness and woe before he reached the age of forty, whereas Noah was suffered to remain on earth till he was nine hundred and fifty!

Second, the heart’s genuine desire for *the glory of God*. In all true prayer the petitions are framed with this specific end in view. Thus has the Lord Jesus Himself plainly taught in the pattern prayer He has graciously given us. “Hallowed be thy name” is the first petition and



therefore the standard which measures all that follows. Hereby we are instructed to make this our paramount concern, as well as plea, when we supplicate the throne of grace. Abraham was “strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20). This is the chief object which faith sets before it, not only asking for that which will glorify God, but that which shall be *most* for His glory. And this, of course, *He for thyself?* seek them not” (Jer 45:5), but seek rather that *God* may be honored and magnified—whether He give or whether He withholds that which thy heart so much longs for.

Third, *complete submission to the unerring wisdom of God*. Our loving Father has reserved to Himself the liberty of deciding *what* is best for us and what is not. “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him” (Isa 30:18). His delays are not arbitrary and capricious, but are regulated by both love and omniscience. He tarries not only for the fittest season wherein to manifest His mercy unto us, but decides which are the most suitable gifts to bestow upon us. He has in mind our highest spiritual good as well as our temporal well-being, but it must be left to *Him* to decide what will most promote these.

“To pray for outward and worldly blessings is not contrary to the will of God, for He hath promised to bestow them. But then, as His promise is conditional, if it is consistent with our good, so truly must our prayers be conditional that God would give them to us, if it is consistent with His will and with our good. Whatsoever we thus ask, we do it according to the will of God and we are sure of speeding in our request, either by obtaining our desires or by being blessed with a denial. For, alas! we are blind and ignorant creatures, and cannot look into the designs and drift of providence, and see how God hath laid in order good and evil in His own purpose. Oftentimes we must mistake evil for good, because of the present appearance of good that it hath. Yea, so shortsighted are we that we can look no farther than outward and present appearance. But God, who sees through the whole series and connection of His own counsels, knows, many times, that those things which we account and desire as good are really evil and therefore it is our wisdom to resign all our desires to His disposal, and to say, ‘Lord, though such temporal enjoyments may seem good and desirable to me at present, yet Thou art infinitely wise, and Thou knowest what the consequence and issue of them will be. I beg them, if they may stand with Thy will and if Thou seest they will be as really good for me, as I suppose them now to be. If they be not so, I beg the favor of a denial.’ This is the right frame in which a Christian’s heart should be when he comes to beg temporal mercies of God, and whilst he thus asks any worldly comforts, he cannot ask amiss” (Ezekiel Hopkins, 1633-1689).

Fourth, in keeping with the covenant under which they were given, many of the promises made to the patriarchs and their descendants were *typical* in character. Earthly blessings adumbrated heavenly ones. This is not an arbitrary assertion of ours, for he who knows anything at all about the things of God is aware that everything during the Abrahamic and Mosaic economies had a figurative meaning. While it be true that every Old Testament promise received a literal fulfillment unto some of God’s children, yet not unto all, for even then the promises which concern temporal blessings necessarily had this proviso. If they promote spiritual and eternal happiness—otherwise they would not have been promises but threats, and the fulfillment or bestowment a snare and a curse rather than a blessing.

Yet let it not be concluded from what has just been said that the *literal* purport of those Old Testament promises which relate to material blessings concern not the Christian today. The greater includes the lesser. We who are his spiritual children and so “blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:9), may rightly make the promises to his natural seed the ground of *our* faith.

We are still upon earth in the bod, and our physical needs are the same today as were those of the Jews of old, and according unto our faith and obedience so will it be unto us. The Lord Jesus plainly declared, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat 6:33), and the “these things” refer to food and clothing. 1 Timothy 4:8 expressly affirms “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of *the life that now is*, and of that which is to come.”

As an illustration and example of what has been pointed out, take the Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 13:15, “For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.” Now the fulfillment of this promise is to be understood in a twofold way. First, mystically or sacramentally. The land of Canaan is to be regarded not only as a country in Asia, fertile and fruitful, but also as a figure and type of that heavenly Canaan where every blessing is found in its fullness. It is for this reason that Christ denominated heaven “Abraham’s bosom” (Luk 16:22), rather than call it after any of the other patriarchs—not “Abel’s bosom,” not Enoch’s, not Moses’, not David’s, but *Abraham’s* bosom.” From hence we learn that in fulfilling His promises God often gives not the particular thing promised, but either something proportional to it or something better. Thus, in promising long life (Eph 6:3) He takes some away early unto *eternal life*. Second, Abraham inherited Canaan (four hundred and thirty years after) in his posterity, they being in him when God made the promise.

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal 3:16). Upon this we cannot now do better than quote from James Haldane (1768-1851), “The original promise was that God would bless Abraham and make him a great nation and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). After many years had elapsed, God condescended to enter into a solemn covenant or engagement with Abraham, which contained three distinct promises—first, that he who had been so long childless should be the father of many nations; second, that He would be a God to him and to his seed; third, that He would give to him and to his seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (Gen 17:4-8).

“Each of these promises received a literal and spiritual fulfillment. The literal fulfillment of the first was the multitude that sprung from Abraham, the many thousands of Israel (Num 10:36). But this promise had also a spiritual fulfillment of which the literal was but a type or figure, and to this the apostle refers, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations), before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Rom 4:16-17). In this sense, Abraham was the father of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, and of them only. Hence the Jews, when cast off for their rejection of Christ, are represented as complaining that Abraham does not acknowledge them (Isa 63:16).

“The second promise was that God would be a God to him and to his seed after him. This had its fulfillment in the riches and prosperity of Abraham, and in Israel after the flesh, being brought into covenant with God, whereby He became their God, and acknowledged them as His peculiar people. Its spiritual fulfillment was God becoming the God of the true Israel—Abraham’s children by faith—by a better covenant, established upon better promises.

“The third promise was the possession of the land of Canaan, literally fulfilled in its conquest and occupation and spiritually in the possession of the better country which those who are of the faith of Abraham shall forever inherit. One great means by which Satan has succeeded in

corrupting the Gospel has been the blending of the literal and spiritual fulfillment of these promises—thus confounding the old and new covenants. The former was a type of the latter and to this the apostle refers in speaking of the revelation of the mystery ‘which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith’ (Rom 16:25-26). The mystery here spoken of is *the hidden meaning* of God’s dealings with the posterity of Abraham to which in his epistles Paul frequently refers.”

Yes, a hundred years ago Satan sought to corrupt the truth of God by confounding the literal and spiritual meaning and fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. During the last two generations, his efforts have been directed toward denying that they have *any* spiritual meaning, value, and application at all. How true it is that “The natural man [no matter how well-versed he be in the letter of Scripture] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,” he cannot know them “for they are spiritually discerned,” and not being a spiritual or regenerate man, he has no “spiritual discernment.” But we shall, D. V., have more to say on this in future articles.

## FAITH

“But without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6). “But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb 4:2). The linking together of these verses shows us the worthlessness of all religious activities where faith be lacking. The outward exercise may be performed diligently and correctly, but unless faith be in operation, God is not honored and the soul is not profited. Faith draws out the heart unto God and faith it is which receives from God—not a mere intellectual assent to what is revealed in Holy Writ, but a supernatural principle of grace which lives upon the God of Scripture. This the natural man, no matter how religious or orthodox he be, has not and no labors of his, no act of his will, can acquire it. It is the sovereign gift of God.

Faith must be operative in all the exercises of the Christian if God is to be glorified and he is to be edified. First, in the reading of the Word, “But these are written, that ye might believe” (Joh 20:31). Second, in listening to the preaching of God’s servants, “The hearing of faith” (Gal 3:2). Third, in praying, “let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (Jam 1:6). Fourth, in our daily life, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Co 5:7), “the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal 2:20). Fifth, in our exit from this world, “These all died in faith” (Heb 11:13). What the breath is to the body, faith is to the soul. For one who is destitute of faith to seek to perform spiritual actions is like putting a spring within a wooden dummy and making it go through mechanical motions.

Now an unregenerate professor may read the Scriptures and yet have no spiritual faith. Just as the devout Hindu peruses the Upanishads and the Mohammedan his Koran, so many in “Christian” countries take up the study of the Bible and yet have no more of the life of God in their souls than have their heathen brethren. Thousands in this land read the Bible, believe in its divine authorship, and become more or less familiar with its contents. A mere professor may read

several chapters every day and yet never *appropriate* a single verse. But faith *applies* God's Word. It applies His fearful threats and trembles before them. It applies His solemn warnings and seeks to heed them. It applies His precepts and cries unto Him for grace to walk in them.

It is the same in listening to the Word preached. A carnal professor will boast of having attended this conference and that, of having heard this famous teacher and that renowned preacher, and be no better off in his soul than if he had never heard any of them. He may listen to two sermons every Sunday and fifty years hence be as dead spiritually as he is today. But the regenerated soul appropriates the message and measures himself by what he hears. He is often convicted of his sins and made to mourn over them. He tests himself by God's standard, and feels that he comes so far short of what he ought to be, that he sincerely doubts the honesty of his own profession. The Word pierces him, like a two-edged sword, and causes him to cry, "O wretched man that I am."

So in prayer. The mere professor often makes the humble Christian feel ashamed of himself. The carnal religionist who has "the gift of the gab" is never at a loss for words. Sentences flow from his lips as readily as do the waters of a babbling brook. Verses of Scripture seem to run through his mind as freely as flour passes through a sieve. Whereas the poor burdened child of God is often unable to do any more than cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Ah, my friends, we need to distinguish sharply between a natural aptitude for "making" nice "prayers" and the *spirit* of true supplication. The one consists merely of words, the other of "*groanings* which cannot be uttered." The one is acquired by religious education, the other is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit.

Thus it is too in conversing about the things of God. The frothy professor can talk glibly and often orthodoxly of "doctrines," yes, and of worldly things, too. According to his mood or according to his audience, so is his theme. But the child of God, while being swift to hear that which is unto edification, is "slow to speak." Ah, my reader, beware of talkative people. A drum makes a lot of noise, but it is hollow inside! "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" (Pro 20:6). When a saint of God does open his lips about spiritual matters, it is to tell of what *the Lord*, in His infinite mercy, has done for him, but the carnal religionist is anxious for others to know what *he* is "doing for the Lord."

The difference is just as real between the genuine Christian and the nominal Christian in connection with their daily lives. While the latter may appear outwardly righteous, yet within they are "full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Mat 23:28). They will put on the *skin* of a real sheep, but in reality they are "wolves in sheep's clothing." But God's children have the *nature* of sheep and learn of Him who is "meek and lowly in heart," and as the elect of God, they put on "mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Col 3:12). They are in private what they appear in public. They worship God in spirit and in truth and have been made to know wisdom in the hidden parts of the heart.

So it is on their passing out of this world. An empty professor may die as easily and as quietly as he lived—deserted by the Holy Spirit, undisturbed by the devil. As the psalmist says, "there are no bands in their death" (Psa 73:4). But this is very different from the end of one whose deeply-plowed and consciously-defiled conscience has been "sprinkled" with the precious blood of Chris. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa 37:37)—yes, a peace which "passeth all understanding" (Phi 4:7), having lived the *life* of the righteous, he dies "the *death* of the righteous" (Num 23:10).

And what is it which distinguishes the one character from the other, wherein lies the difference between the genuine Christian and he who is one in name only? This—a God-given,

Spirit-wrought faith in the heart. Not a mere head-knowledge and intellectual assent to the truth, but a living, spiritual, vital principle in the heart—a faith which purifies the heart (Act 15:9), which “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6), which “overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4). Yes, a faith which is divinely sustained amidst trials within and opposition without, a faith which exclaims, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

True, this faith is not always in exercise, nor is it equally strong at all times. The favored possessor of it must be taught by painful experience that as he did not originate it neither can *he* command it. Therefore does he turn unto its Author and say, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). And then it is that, when reading the Word, he is enabled to lay hold of its precious promises. That when bowing before the throne of grace, he is enabled to cast his burden upon the Lord. That when he rises to go about his temporal duties, he is enabled to lean upon the everlasting arms. And that when he is called upon to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, he triumphantly cries, “I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psa 23:4). “Lord, increase our faith” (Luk 17:5).

## ASSURANCE

### Dialogue 2

Mr. Humble Heart: “Good morning, sir. May I beg the favor of an hour of your valuable time?” Editor: “Come in and welcome. What can I do for you?” Humble Heart: “I am sore troubled in spirit. I long so much to be able to call God, ‘*my* Father,’ but I fear I might be guilty of lying were I to do so. There are many times when I have a little hope that He has begun a good work within me, but alas, for the most part, I find such a mass of corruption working within, that I feel sure that I have never been made a new creature in Christ. My heart is so cold and hard toward God, that it seems impossible the Holy Spirit could have shed abroad God’s love in me. Unbelief and doubtings so often master me that it would be presumptuous to think I possess the faith of God’s elect. Yet I *want* to love Him, trust Him, serve Him, but it seems I cannot.”

Editor: “I am very glad you called. It is rare indeed to meet with an honest soul these days.” Humble Heart: “Excuse me, sir, but I do not want you to form a wrong impression of me. An *honest* heart is the very blessing I crave, but I am painfully conscious, from much clear evidence, that I possess it not. *My* heart is deceitful above all things and I am full of hypocrisy. I have often begged God to make me holy and right after, my actions proved that I did not mean what I said. I have often thanked God for His mercies and then have soon fretted and murmured when His providence crossed my will. I had quite a battle before I came here to see you tonight, as to whether I was really seeking help or as to whether my secret desire was to win your esteem, and I am not sure now which was my real motive.”

Humble Heart: “To come to the point, sir, if I am not intruding. I have read and re-read your articles on ‘Assurance’ which appeared in last year’s magazines. Some things in those articles seemed to give me a little comfort, but other things almost drove me to despair. Sometimes your

description of a born-again soul agreed with my own experience, but at other times I seemed as far from measuring up to it as the poles are asunder. So I do not know where I am. I have sought to heed 2 Corinthians 13:5 and ‘examine’ myself and when I did so, I could see nothing but a mass of contradictions or it would be more accurate to say, for each one thing I found which seemed to show that I was regenerate, I found ten things to prove that I could not be so. And now, sir, I’m mourning night and day, for I feel of all men the most miserable.”

Editor: “Hypocrites are not exercised about their motives, nor troubled over the deceitfulness of their hearts! At any rate, I am thankful to see you are so deeply concerned about your soul’s eternal interests.” Humble Heart: “Alas, sir, I am not half as much concerned about them as I ought to be. That is another thing which occasions me much anguish. When the Lord Jesus tells us that the human soul is worth more than the whole world put together (Mar 8:36), I feel that I must be thoroughly blinded by Satan and completely under the dominion of sin, seeing that I am so careless. It is true that at times I am alarmed about my state and fearful that I shall soon be in hell. At times too I seem to seek God more earnestly and read His Word more diligently, but alas, my goodness is ‘as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away’ (Hos 6:4). The cares of this life so soon crowd out thoughts of the life to come. O, sir, I want reality, not pretense; I want to make sure, yet cannot.”

Editor: “That is not so simple a task as many would have us believe.” Humble Heart: “It certainly is not. I have consulted several Bible teachers, only to find them ‘physicians of no value’ (Job 13:4). I have also conferred with some who boasted that they never have a doubt, and they quoted to me Acts 16:31, and on telling them I did believe, they cried, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there was no peace in my heart.” See Jer 6:14. Editor: “Ah, dear friend, it is not without reason that God has bidden us ‘*give diligence* to make your calling and election sure’ (2Pe 1:10). And even after we have given diligence, we still need the Holy Spirit to ‘beareth witness with our spirit, that we *are* the children of God’ (Rom 8:16). Moreover, spiritual assurance may easily be lost, or at least be clouded, as is evident from the case of him who wrote the 23rd Psalm, for at a later date he had to cry unto God, ‘Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.’

Editor: “Before proceeding further, had we not better ask the help of the Lord. His Holy Word says, ‘In *all* thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths’ (Pro 3:6). And now, dear brother, for such I am assured you really are, what is it that most causes you to doubt that you have passed from death unto life?” Humble Heart: “My inward experiences, the wickedness of my heart, the many defeats I encounter daily.” Editor: “Perhaps you are looking for perfection in the flesh.” Humble Heart: “No, hardly that, for I know the ‘flesh’ or old nature is still left in the Christian. But I have met with some who claim to be living ‘the victorious life,’ who say they never have a doubt, never a rising of anger, discontent, or any wicked feelings or desires, that Christ so controls them that unclouded peace and joy are theirs all the time.”

Editor: “Bear with me if I speak plainly, but such people are either hypnotized by the devil or they are fearful liars. God’s Word says, ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us’ (1Jo 1:8). And again, ‘For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not’ (Ecc 7:20). And again, ‘in many things we offend all’ (Jam 3:2). The beloved Apostle Paul, when well advanced in the Christian life, declared, ‘I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members’ (Rom 7:21-23).

Humble Heart: “That relieves my mind somewhat, yet it scarcely reaches the root of my difficulty. What troubles me so much is this—when God regenerates a man, he becomes a new

creature in Christ Jesus. The change wrought in him is so great that it is termed a 'passing from death unto life.' It is obvious that if God the Holy Spirit dwells in a person, that there must be a radical difference produced, both inwardly and outwardly, from what he was before. Now it is *this* which I *fail* to find in myself. Instead of being any better than I was a year ago, I feel I am worse. Instead of humility filling my heart, so often pride rules it. Instead of lying passive like clay in the Potter's hand to be molded by Him, I am like a wild ass' colt. Instead of rejoicing in the Lord always, I am frequently filled with bitterness and repinings."

Editor: "Such experiences as you describe *are* very sad and humbling, and need to be mourned over and confessed to God. They must *never* be excused nor glossed over. Nevertheless, they are not incompatible with the Christian state. Rather are they so many proofs that he who is experimentally acquainted with the 'plague of his own heart' (1Ki 8:38) is one in experience with the most eminent of God's saints. Abraham acknowledged he was 'dust and ashes' (Gen 18:27). Job said, 'I abhor myself' (Job 42:6). David prayed, 'Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed' (Psa 6:2). Isaiah exclaimed, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips' (Isa 6:5). In the anguish of his heart, Jeremiah asked, 'Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?' (Jer 20:18). Daniel once owned, 'There remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption' (Dan 10:8). Paul cried, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom 7:24).

"One of the principal things which distinguishes a regenerate person from an unregenerate one may be likened unto two rooms which have been swept but not dusted. In one, the blinds are raised and the sunlight streams in, exposing the dust still lying on the furniture. In the other, the blinds are lowered and one walking through the room would be unable to discern its real condition. Thus it is in the case of one who has been renewed by the Spirit. His eyes have been opened to *see* the awful filth which lurks in every corner of his heart. But in the case of the unregenerate, though they have occasional twinges of conscience when they act wrongly, they are very largely ignorant of the awful fact that they are a complete mass of corruption unto the pure eyes of the thrice holy God. It is true that an unregenerate person may be instructed in the truth of the total depravity of fallen man, and he may 'believe' the same, yet his belief does not humble his heart, fill him with anguish, make him loathe himself, and feel that hell is the only place which is fit for him to dwell in. But it is far otherwise with one who sees light in *God's* light (Psa 36:9). He will not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smites upon his leprous breast, crying, 'God be merciful to me the sinner'."

Humble Heart: "Would you kindly turn to the positive side and give me a brief description of what characterizes a genuine Christian?" Editor: "Among other gifts, every real Christian has such a knowledge of God in Christ, as works by love, that he is stirred up to earnestly inquire after *the will of God*, and studies His Word to learn that will, having a sincere desire and making an honest endeavor to live in the faith and practice of it." Humble Heart: "I cannot boast of my knowledge of God in Christ, yet by divine grace this I may say, that I desire no other heaven on earth than to know and to do God's will and be assured that I have *His* approval." Editor: "That is indeed a good sign that your soul has been actually renewed, and doubtless He who has begun a work of grace in your heart, will make the great change manifest in your life and actions. No matter what he thinks or says, no unregenerate man *really* desires to live a life which is pleasing to *God*."

Humble Heart: "God forbid that I should flatter myself, yet I hope I have often found delight when reading God's Word or hearing it preached, and I do sincerely meditate upon it, and long

that I may ‘grow in grace.’ Yet at times I am tempted with vain and vile thoughts and I strive to banish them, my heart rising up against them, yet sometimes I yield to them. I loathe lying and cursing and cannot endure the company of those who hate practical godliness, yet my withdrawal from them seems nothing but pharisaic hypocrisy, for I am such a miserable failure myself. I pray to God for deliverance from temptation and for grace to resist the devil, but I fear that I do not have His ear, for more often than not I am defeated by sin and Satan.”

Editor: “When you thus fall in your duty, or fall into sin, what do you think of yourself and your ways? How are you affected therewith?” Humble Heart: “When I am in this deplorable condition, my soul is grieved, my joy of heart and peace of conscience gone. But when I am a little recovered out of this sinful lethargy, my heart is melted with sorrow over my folly, and I address myself to God with great fear and shame, begging Him to forgive me, pleading 1 John 1:9 and humbly imploring Him to ‘renew a right spirit within me’ (Psa 51:10).” Editor: “And *why* is it that you are so troubled when sin conquers you?” Humble Heart: “Because I truly wish to please the Lord and it is my greatest grief when I realize that I have dishonored and displeased Him. His mercy has kept me, thus far, from breaking out into open and public sins, yet there is very much *within* which I know He hates.”

Editor: “Well, my dear brother and companion in the path of tribulation, God has ordained that the Lamb shall be eaten with ‘*bitter* herbs’ (Exo 12:8). So it was with the apostle, ‘As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing’ (2Co 6:10) summed up his dual experience. ‘Sorrowful over his sinful failures, both of omission and commission, yet ‘rejoicing’ over the provisions which divine grace has made for us while we are in this dreary desert—the Mercy Seat ever open to us, whither we may draw near, unburden our heavy hearts, and pour out our tale of woe, the fountain which has been ‘opened for sin and for uncleanness’ See Zec 13:1, whither we may repair for cleansing. I am indeed thankful to learn that your conscience confirms what your tongue has uttered. You have expressed enough to clearly evidence that the Holy Spirit has begun a good work in your soul. But I trust you also have faith in the Lord Jesus, the Mediator, by whom alone any sinner can draw near unto God.”

Humble Heart: “By divine grace I do desire to acknowledge and embrace the Lord Jesus upon the terms on which He is proclaimed in the Gospel—to believe all His doctrine as my Teacher, to trust in and depend upon the atoning sacrifice which He offered as the great High Priest, and to submit to His rule and government as King. But alas, in connection with the last, ‘to *will* is present with me; but how to *perform* that which is good I find not’ (Rom 7:18). Editor: “No real Christian ever attains his ideal in this life. He never reaches that perfect standard which God has set before us in His Word and which was so blessedly exemplified in the life of Christ. Even the Apostle Paul, near the close of his life, had to say, ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus’ (Phi 3:12). But may I ask if you are sensible of how you arrived at the good desires you mentioned? Do you suppose that such a disposition is *natural* to you or that it has resulted from your own improvement of your faculties?”

Humble Heart: “No, sir, I dare not ascribe to nature that which is the effect and fruit of divine grace. If I have any measure of sanctification (which is what I long to be assured of ), then it can only be by the gift and operation of God. I am too well acquainted with my wretched self: I know too well that by nature I am alive to vanity and sin, but dead to God and all real goodness, that folly possesses my soul, darkness shrouds my understanding, that I am utterly unable to will or to do what is pleasing in God’s sight, and that my natural heart is set contrary to the way of



salvation proposed in the Gospel, rising up against its flesh—condemning precepts and commandments. I see, I know, I feel that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth *no* good thing.”

Editor: “Then do you realize what must be the outcome if God were to leave you unto yourself?” Humble Heart: “Yes, indeed. Without the assistance of His Holy Spirit, I should certainly make shipwreck of the faith. My daily prayer is, ‘Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe’ (Psa 119:117). My earnest desire is that I may watch and pray against every temptation. There is nothing I dread more than apostatising, relaxing in my duty, returning to wallow in the mire.”

Editor: “These are all *plain evidences of the saving grace of God at work within you*, which I beseech Him to continue, so that you may be preserved with a tender conscience, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, and obtain a full assurance of His love for you.”

Humble Heart: “I thank you kindly, sir, for your patience and help. What you have said makes me feel lighter in heart, but I wish to go home and prayerfully ponder the same, for I dare not take any *man’s* word for it. I want God Himself to ‘say unto my soul, I am *thy* salvation’ (Psa 35:3). Will you not pray that it may please Him so to do?” Editor: “You shall certainly have a place in my feeble petitions. The Lord be very gracious unto you.”

## GOOD NEWS

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” We trust that these (or similar) words will ascend to heaven from many hearts, when we report that, by the unchanging faithfulness and the abounding goodness of the Triune Jehovah, we closed our magazine-books for 1932 (on November 30, 1932) with a balance to the good of \$85 (seventeen pounds). In spite of the worldwide “depression,” acutely felt here in the U.S.A., in spite of the fact that we had two hundred less names on our list than in the preceding year, and in spite of the fact that we sent the “Studies” unto hundreds who were unable to have any financial fellowship with this work, our credit-balance for 1932 was larger than any of the previous ten years! What a God we serve!

We trust the above good news will be used by the One whom we are seeking to serve to encourage many of His dear people to trust Him more fully. The publishing of these “Studies” is entirely “a work of faith and labor of love.” We are completely dependent upon Him who “faileth not” (Zep 3:5) for funds with which to pay for each issue. We spread our need before Him, plead His sure promises, count upon His veracity, and He never disappoints us. One-third of this balance we have distributed among the “poor of the flock,” who are known personally to us. One-third is carried forward unto this year’s account. The remainder will be used (D.V.) in printing tracts and booklets. Praise our God and continue in prayer for us.



# March

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 3. The Deity of the Holy Spirit

In our last article, we endeavored to supply from the testimony of Holy Writ abundant and clear evidence that the Holy Spirit is a conscious, intelligent, personal being. Our present paper concerns the nature and dignity of His person. We sincerely trust that our present inquiry will not strike our readers as being a superfluous one. Surely any mind which is impressed with a due reverence for the subject we are upon, will readily allow that we cannot be too minute and particular in the investigation of a point of such infinite importance. While it be true that almost every passage which we brought forward to demonstrate the Spirit's personality, also contained decisive proof of His Godhead, yet we deemed the present aspect of our subject of such moment as to be justly entitled unto a separate regard. The more so, as error at this point is fatal to the soul.

Having shown, then, that God's Word expressly and unequivocally teaches that the Spirit is a person, the next question to be considered is, Under what character are we to consider Him? What rank does He occupy in the scale of existence? It has been truly said that, "He is either God, possessing, in a distinction of person, an ineffable unity of the divine nature with the Father and the Son, or He is the creature of God, infinitely removed from Him in essence and dignity, and having no other than a derivative excellence in that rank to which He is appointed in creation. There is no medium betwixt the one and the other. Nothing intermediate between the Creator and created can be admissible. So that were the Holy Spirit to be placed at the top of all creation, even as high above the highest angel, as that angel transcends the lowest reptile of animated life, the chasm would be still infinite, and He, who is emphatically called the *Eternal Spirit*, would not be God" (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).

It will now be our endeavor to show from the Word of truth that the Holy Spirit is distinguished by such names and attributes, that He is endowed with such a plenitude of underived power, and that He is the author of such works as to altogether transcend finite ability, and such as can belong to none but God Himself. However mysterious and inexplicable to human reason the existence of a distinction of persons in the essence of the Godhead may be, yet if we submissively bow to the plain teachings of the divine oracles, then the conclusion that there subsists three divine persons who are coessential, coeternal, and coequal is unavoidable. He of

whom such works as the creation of the universe, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the formation of the humanity of Christ, the regeneration and sanctification of the elect, is and must be, GOD or to use the language of 2 Corinthians 3:17, "*Now the Lord is that Spirit.*"

1. The Holy Spirit is expressly called *God*. To Ananias Peter said, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit" and then in the very next verse, he affirms, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but *unto God*" (Act 5:3-4). If, then, lying to the Holy Spirit be lying to God, it necessarily follows that the Spirit must be God. Again, the saints are called "*the temple of God,*" and the reason proving this is that "*the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*" (1Co 3:16). In like manner, the body of the individual saint is designated "*the temple of the Holy Spirit,*" and then the exhortation is made, "*therefore glorify God in your body*" (1Co 6:19-20). In 1 Corinthians 12, where the diversity of His gifts, administrations, and operations are mentioned, He is spoken of severally as "*the same Spirit*" (1Co 12:4), "*the same Lord*" (1Co 12:5), "*the same God*" (1Co 12:6). In 2 Corinthians 6:16, the Holy Spirit is called, "*the living God.*"

2. The Holy Spirit is expressly called *Jehovah*, a name that is utterly incommunicable to all creatures and which can be applied to none except the Great Supreme. It was Jehovah who spake by the mouth of all the holy prophets from the beginning of the world (Luk 1:68-70), yet in 2 Peter 1:21, it is implicitly declared that those prophets all spake "by the Holy Spirit." See also 2 Samuel 23:2-3 and compare Acts 1:16! It was Jehovah whom Israel tempted in the wilderness, "And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the Most High" (Psa 78:17-18), yet in Isaiah 63:10-11, this is specifically termed, "rebelling against and vexing the Holy Spirit"! In Deuteronomy 32:12, we read, "The Lord alone did lead him [Jacob]," yet speaking of the same people, at the same time, Isaiah 63:14 declares, "The Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people." It was Jehovah who bade Isaiah, "Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed" (Isa 6:8-9), while the apostle declared, "Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye" etc. (Act 28:25-26)! What could more plainly establish the identity of Jehovah and the Holy Spirit? Note that the Holy Spirit is called, "*the Lord*" in 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

3. The *perfections of God* are all found in the Spirit. By what is the nature of any being determined, but by its properties? He who possesses the properties peculiar to an angel or man is rightly esteemed one. So He who possess the attributes or properties which belong alone to God, must be considered and worshipped as God. The Scriptures very clearly and abundantly affirm that the Holy Spirit *is* possessed of the attributes peculiar to God. They ascribe to Him absolute *holiness*. As God is called, "*Holy,*" "*the Holy One,*" being therein described by that superlatively excellent property of His nature wherein He is "*glorious in holiness*" (Exo 15:11), so is the third person of the Trinity designated, "*the Spirit of holiness*" (Rom 1:4) to denote the holiness of His nature and the deity of His person. The Spirit is *eternal* (Heb 9:14). He is *omnipresent*, "*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?*" (Psa 139:7). He is *omniscient*, see 1 Corinthians 2:10-11. He is *omnipotent*, being termed "*the power of the Highest*" (Luk 1:35). See also Micah 3:8 and compare Isaiah 40:28.

4. The *absolute sovereignty and supremacy* of the Spirit manifest His Godhead. In Matthew 4:1, we are told, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness." Who but a divine person had the right to direct the Mediator? And to whom but God would the Redeemer have submitted! In John 3:8, the Lord Jesus drew an analogy between the wind which "*bloweth where it listeth*" (not being at the disposal or direction of any creature), and the imperial operations of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:11, it is expressly affirmed that the Holy Spirit has the distribution of all spiritual gifts, having nothing but His own pleasure for His rule. He *must*, then, be "God

over all, blessed forever” (Rom 9:5). In Acts 13:2-4, we find the Holy Spirit calling men unto the work of the ministry, which is solely a divine prerogative, though wicked men have abrogated it unto themselves. In these verses it will be found that the Spirit appointed their work, commanded them to be set apart by the church, and sent them forth. In Acts 20:28, it is plainly declared that the Holy Spirit set officers over the church.

5. The *works ascribed to the Spirit* clearly demonstrate His Godhead. Creation itself is attributed to Him, no less than to the Father and the Son: “By the Spirit he hath garnished the heavens” (Job 26:13). “The Spirit of God hath made me” (Job 33:4). He is concerned in the work of providence, Isaiah 40:13-15, Acts 16:6-7. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2Ti 3:16), the source of which is the Spirit Himself (2Pe 1:21). The humanity of Christ was miraculously formed by the Spirit (Mat 1:20). Christ was anointed for His work by the Spirit (Isa 61:1; Joh 3:34). His miracles were performed by the Spirit’s power (Mat 12:28). He was raised from the dead by the Spirit (Rom 8:11). Who but a divine person could have wrought such works as these!

Reader, do you have a personal and inward proof that the Holy Spirit is none other than God? Has He wrought in you that which no finite power could? Has He brought you from death unto life, made you a new creature in Christ, imparted to you a living faith, filled you with holy longings after God? Does He breathe into you the spirit of prayer, take of the things of Christ and show them unto you, apply to your heart both the precepts and promises of God? If, so, then, these are so many witnesses in your own bosom of the deity of the Blessed Spirit.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 63. The Perseverance of Faith (11:13-14)

Having described some of the eminent acts of faith put forth by the earliest members of God’s family, the apostle now pauses to insert a general commendation of the faith of those he had already named, and (as is clear from Heb 11:39-40) of others yet to follow. This commendation is set forth in v. 13 and is amplified in the next three verses. The evident design of the Holy Spirit in this was to press upon the Hebrews, and upon us, the imperative need of such a faith as would last, wear, overcome obstacles, and endure unto the end. Even the natural man is capable of “making good resolutions” and has flashes of endeavor to please God, but he is entirely lacking in that principle which “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (1Co 13:7).

The faith of God’s elect is like unto its divine Author in these respects—it is living, incorruptible, and cannot be conquered by the devil. Being implanted by God, the gift and grace

of faith can never be lost. Strikingly was this illustrated in the history of the patriarchs. Called upon to leave the land of their birth, to sojourn in a country filled with idolaters, owning no portion of it, dwelling in tents, suffering many hardships and trials, and living without any such peculiar temporal advantages as might answer to the singular favor which the Lord declared He bore to them, nevertheless, they all *died in faith*. The eye of their hearts saw clearly the blessings God had promised, and persuaded that they would be theirs in due season, they joyfully anticipated their future portion and gave up present advantages for the sake thereof.

In the verses which are to be before us, the apostle, then, stresses the great importance of seeking and possessing a persevering faith, therefore does he make mention of the fact that as long as they remained in this world, the Old Testament saints were believers in the promises of God. It is the durability and constancy of their faith which is commended. Despite all the workings of unbelief within (records of which are found in Genesis in the case of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and all the assaults of temptation from without, they persisted in clinging to God and His Word. They lived by faith and they died in faith. Therefore have they left us an example that we should follow their steps. Beautifully did John Calvin (1509-1564) point out:

“There is expressed here a difference between us and the fathers. Though God gave to the fathers only a taste of that grace which is largely poured on us, though He showed to them at a distance only an obscure representation of Christ, who is now set forth to us clearly before our eyes, yet they were satisfied and never fell away from their faith. How much greater reason then have we at this day to persevere! If we grow faint, we are doubly inexcusable. It is then an enhancing circumstance, that the fathers had a distant view of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, while we at this day have so near a view of it, and that they all hailed the promises afar off, while we have them as it were quite near us, for if they nevertheless persevered even unto death, what sloth will it be to become wearied in faith, when the Lord sustains us by so many helps. Were any one to object and say that they could not have believed without receiving the promises on which faith is necessarily founded, to this the answer is, that the expression is to be understood comparatively. For they were far from that high position to which God has raised us. Hence it is that, though they had the same salvation promised them, yet they had not the promises so clearly revealed to them as they are to us under the kingdom of Christ, but they were content to behold them afar off.”

“These all died in faith” (Heb. 11:13), or more literally, “In [or “according to”] faith died these all.” Differing from most of the commentators, we believe those words take in the persons mentioned previously, from Abel onwards. “These all” grammatically include those who precede as well as those which follow—the relative pronoun embracing all those set forth in the catalog, namely, young and old, male and female, great and small. “The same Spirit works in all, and shows forth his power in all,” see 2Co 4:13 (William Gouge, 1575-1653). Against this it may be objected that Enoch died not. True, but the apostle is referring only to those that died, just as Genesis 46:7 must be understood as excepting Joseph, who was already in Egypt. Moreover, though Enoch died not as the others, he was removed from earth to heaven, and before his translation he continued living by faith unto the very end, which is the main thing here intended.

“These all died in [or “according to”] faith” (Heb. 11:13). The faith in which they died is the same as that described in the first verse of our chapter, namely, a justifying and sanctifying faith. That they “died in faith” does not necessarily mean that their faith was actually in exercise during the hour of death, but more strictly, that they never apostatized from the faith. Though they actually obtained or possessed not that which was the object of their faith, nevertheless, unto the end of their earthly pilgrimage they confidently looked forward unto the same. Five effects or

workings of their faith are here mentioned, each of which we must carefully ponder. First, they “received not the promises.” Second, but they saw them “afar off.” Third, they were “persuaded of them.” Fourth, they “embraced” them. Fifth, in consequence thereof, they “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

As we shall see (D. V.) when taking up later verses, some of the Old Testament saints died in the actual exercise of faith. To die in faith is to have an assured confidence in an estate of glory and bliss. “And hereunto is required: 1. The firm belief of a substantial existence after this life. Without this, all faith and hope must perish in death. 2. A resignation and trust of their departing souls into the care and power of God. 3. The belief in a future state of blessedness and rest, here called an heavenly country, a city prepared for them by God. 4. Faith of the resurrection of their bodies after death, that their entire persons, which had undergone the pilgrimage of this life, might be instated in eternal rest” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Thousands who are now in their graves were taught that it was wrong to expect death and make suitable preparation for it. They were told that the return of Christ was so near, He would certainly come during their lifetime. Alas, the writer has, in measure, been guilty of the same thing. True, it is both the Christian’s happy privilege and bounden duty to be “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13), for this is the grand prospect which God hath set before His people in all ages, but He has nowhere told us *when* His Son shall descend. He *may* do so today. He may not for hundreds of years. But to say that “looking for that blessed hope” makes it wrong to anticipate death is manifestly absurd. The Old Testament saints had just as definite promises for the first advent of Christ as the New Testament saints have for His second and they thought frequently of death!

It is greatly to be feared that much of the popularity with which the “premillennial and imminent coming of Christ” has been received, may be attributable to a carnal dread of death. A strong appeal is made to the flesh when people can be persuaded that they are likely to escape the grave. That one generation of Christians will do so is clear from 1 Corinthians 15:51, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, but how many generations have already supposed that *theirs* was the one which would be raptured to heaven, and how many of them were quite unprepared when death overtook them, only that Day will show. We are well aware that these lines are not likely to meet with a favorable reception from some of our readers, but we are not seeking to please them, but God. Any man who is ready to die is prepared for the Lord’s return. As you may very likely die before the second advent, it is only the part of wisdom to make sure you are prepared for death.

And who are they whose souls are prepared for the dissolution of the body? Those who have disarmed death beforehand by plucking out its sting, and this by seeking reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. The hornet is harmless when its sting is extracted. A snake need not be dreaded if its fang and poison have been removed. So it is with death. “The sting of death is *sin*” (1Co 15:56), and if we have repented of our sins, turned from them with full purpose of heart to serve God, and have sought and obtained forgiveness and healing in the atoning and cleansing blood of Christ, then death cannot harm us—it will but conduct us into the presence of God and everlasting felicity. Who are ready to die? Those who evidence and establish their title to eternal life by personal holiness, which is the “first fruits” of heavenly glory. It is by *walking in* the light of God’s Word that we make it manifest that we are meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

“These all died in [or “according to”] faith” (Heb 11:13). To die in faith we must live by faith. And for this there must be, first, diligent labor to obtain a knowledge of divine things. The understanding must be instructed before the path of duty can be known. “Teach me thy way,” (Psa 27:11). “Order my steps in thy word,” (Psa 119:133). must be our daily prayer. Second, the

hiding of God's Word in our hearts. Its precepts must be meditated upon, memorized, and made conscience of. Only then will our affections and lives be conformed to them. God's Word is designed to be not only a light to our understanding, but also a lamp upon our path. Our walk is to be guided by it. Third, the regular contemplation of Christ by the soul—a worshipful and adoring consideration of His fathomless love, His marvelous grace, His infinite compassion, His present intercession. This will deliver from a legal spirit, warm the heart, supply strength for duty, and make us *want* to please Him.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises” (Heb. 11:13). The word “promises” is a metonymy, for the things promised. Literally they *had* “received the promises,” for that which they had heard from God was the basis of their faith. This is clear from Hebrews 11:10, 14, 16. The things promised concerned the spiritual blessings of the Gospel dispensation and the future heavenly inheritance. The promises made to the fathers or “elders” had respect unto Christ the blessed “seed” and to heaven of which Canaan was the type. Observe that this first clause of verse 13 plainly intimates that *the same* promises were given—though the outer shell of them varied—to Abel, Enoch, and Noah, as were afterwards repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Each one died in the firm expectation of the promised Messiah and in believing views of the heavenly glory. *So* to die, was comfortable to themselves, and confirming to others the reality of what they professed.

“Not having received the promises.” The Greek word for “received” signifies the actual participation in and possession of. Faith, then, relies upon and rests in that which is not yet ours. A large part of the life of faith consists in laying hold of and enjoying the things promised, before the actual possession of them is obtained. It is by meditating upon and extracting their sweetness that the soul is fed and strengthened. The present spiritual happiness of the Christian consists more in promises and expectant anticipation than an actual possession, for “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It is this which enables us to say, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which *shall be* revealed in us” (Rom 8:18).

“But having seen them afar off” (Heb. 11:13). This, because the eyes of their understanding had been divinely enlightened (Eph 1:18) and thus they were able to perceive in the promises the wisdom, goodness, and love of God. True, the fulfillment of those promises would be in the remote future, but the eye of faith is strong and endowed with long-distance vision. Thus it was with Abraham. He “rejoiced to see my day,” said Christ, “and he saw it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56). Thus it was with Moses who “had respect unto the recompense of the reward” and “endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:26-27). Solemn indeed is the contrast presented in 2 Peter 1:9, where we read of those who failed to add to their faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, love, and in consequence of an undeveloped Christian character “cannot see afar off.”

“And were persuaded of them” (Heb. 11:13). This announces the soul's satisfactory acquiescence in the veracity of God as to the making good of His Word. It was the setting to of their seal that He is true (Joh 3:33), which is done when the heart truly receives His testimony. The word “persuaded” means an assured confidence, which is what faith works in the mind. A blessed example of this is seen in the case of Abraham, who, though about an hundred years old and his wife's womb dead, yet when God declared they should have a son, he was “fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom 4:21). Ah, my reader, is it not because we are so dilatory in meditating upon the “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4) of God, that our hearts are so little persuaded of the verity and value of them!

“And embraced them,” (Heb. 11:13) not with a cold and formal reception of them, but with a warm and hearty welcome. Such is the nature of true faith when it lays hold of the promises of salvation. This is ever the effect of assurance—a thankful and joyful appropriation of the things of God. Faith not only discerns the value of spiritual things, is fully persuaded of their reality, but also loves them. Faith adheres as well as assents. In Scripture faith is expressed by taste as well as sight. Faith “sees” with the understanding, is “persuaded” in the heart, and “embraces” by the will. Thus, the *order* of the verbs in this verse (Heb 11:13) teaches us an important practical lesson. The promises of God are first viewed or contemplated, then rested upon as reliable, and then delighted in. If then we would have livelier affections, we must meditate more upon the promises of God. It is the mind which effects the heart.

Ere passing on, let us inquire, are God’s promises really precious unto us? Perhaps we are ready to answer at once, yes, but let us test ourselves. Do our hearts cling to them with love and delight? Can we truly say, “I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches” (Psa 119:14)? What influence do God’s promises have upon us in seasons of trial and grief? Do they supply us with more comfort than the dearest things of this world? In the midst of distress and sorrow, do we realize that “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17)? What effect do God’s promises have upon our praying? Do we plead them before the throne of grace? Do we say with David, “Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope” (Psa 119:49)?

“And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). They who really embrace the promises of God are suitably affected and influenced by them. Their delight in heavenly things is manifested by a weanedness from earthly things—as the woman at the well forgot her bucket when Christ was revealed to her soul (Joh 4:28). When a man truly becomes a Christian, he at once begins to view time, and all the objects of time, in a very different light from what he did before. So it was with the patriarchs. Their faith had a powerful and transforming effect upon their lives. They made profession of their faith and hope. They made it manifest that their chief interest was neither in nor of the world. They had such a satisfying portion in the promises of God that they publicly renounced such a concern in the world as other men take whose portion is only in this life.

The patriarchs made no secret of the fact that their citizenship and inheritance was elsewhere. Unto the sons of Heth, Abraham confessed, “I am a stranger and a sojourner with you” (Gen 23:4). Unto Pharaoh, Jacob said, “The days of the years of my *pilgrimage* are an hundred and thirty” (Gen 47:9). Nor is this to be explained on the ground that other nations were then in occupation of Canaan. Long after Israel entered into possession of that land David cried, “Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were” (Psa 39:12), and again, “I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me” (Psa 119:19). So too before all the congregation he owned unto God, “For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers (1Ch 29:15). Clear proof do these verses furnish that the Old Testament saints, equally with the New, apprehended their *heavenly* calling and glory.

“And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). The two terms, though very similar in thought, are not identical. The one refers more to the position, the place taken, the other to condition, how one conducts himself in that place. They were “strangers” because their home was in heaven, “pilgrims,” because journeying thither. As another has said, “It is possible to be a ‘pilgrim’ without being a ‘stranger.’ But once we realize our true strangership, we are perforce compelled to be ‘pilgrims.’ We may be ‘pilgrims,’ and yet, in our pilgrimage,



may visit all the cities and churches in the world, and include them all in our embrace; but if we are true 'sojourners' we shall be 'strangers' to them all, and shall be compelled, as Abraham was, to erect our own solitary altar to Jehovah in the midst of them all. How could Abraham be a worshipper with the Canaanites? Impossible! This is why the 'altar' is so closely connected with the 'tent' in Genesis 12:8 and in Abraham's sojourn" (E. W. B.)

That which was spiritually typified by the outward life of the patriarchs as "strangers and pilgrims" was the Christian's renunciation of the world. As those whose citizenship is in heaven (Phi 3:20), we are bidden to be "not conformed to this world" (Rom 12:2). The patriarchs demonstrated that they were "strangers" by taking no part in the apostate religion, politics, or social life of the Canaanites and evidenced that they were "pilgrims" by dwelling in tents, moving about from place to place. How far are *we* making manifest our crucifixion to the world (Gal 6:14)? Does our daily walk show we are "partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1)? Have we ceased looking on this world as our home and its people as our people? Are we seeking to lay up treasure in heaven or do we still hanker after the fleshpots of Egypt? When we pray, "Lord, conform me to Thine image," do we mean "strip me of all which hinders!"?

The figure of the "stranger" applied to the child of God here on earth is very pertinent and full. The analogies between one who is in a foreign country and the Christian in this world are marked and numerous. In a strange land, one is not appreciated for his birth, but is avoided (Joh 15:19). The habits, ways, language are strange to him (1Pe 4:4). He has to be content with a stranger's fare (1Ti 6:7-8). He needs to be careful not to give offense to the government (Col 4:6). He has to continually inquire his ways (Psa 5:8). Unless he conforms to the ways of that foreign country, he is easily identified (Mat 26:73). He is often assailed with homesickness, for his heart is not where his body is (Phi 1:23).

The figure of the "pilgrim" as it applies to the Christian is equally suggestive. Moving on from place to place, he never feels at home. He finds himself very much alone, for he meets with few who are traveling his way. Those he does encounter afford him very little encouragement, for they think him peculiar. He is very grateful for any kindness shown him. Sensible of his dependence on providence, he is thankful whenever God grants him favor in the eyes of the wicked. He carries nothing with him but what he deems useful for his journey. All superfluities are regarded as encumbrances. He tarries not to gaze upon the various vanities around him. He never thinks of turning back because of the difficulties of the way. He has a definite goal in view and toward it he steadily presses.

We ought to evidence that we are "strangers and pilgrims" by using the things of this world (when *necessity* requires), but not abusing them (1Co 7:31). By being contented with that portion of this world's goods which God has assigned us (Phi 4:11). By conscientiously seeking to discharge our own responsibility and not being a "busybody in other men's matters" (1Pe 4:15). By being moderate and temperate in all things and thus "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1Pe 2:11). By laying aside every hindering weight and mortifying our members which are upon the earth, so that we may run with patience the race that is set before us (Heb 12:1). By daily keeping in mind the brevity and uncertainty of this life (Pro 27:1). By constantly keeping before the heart our future inheritance, knowing that we shall only be satisfied when we awake in our Lord's likeness.

"If they in spirit amid dark clouds, took a flight into the celestial country, what ought we to do at this day? For Christ stretches forth His hand to us, as it were openly from heaven to raise us up to Himself. If the land of Canaan did not engross their attention, how more weaned from things below ought we to be, who have no promised habitation in this world?" (John Calvin). When

Basil (a devoted servant of Christ, at the beginning of the “Dark Ages”) was threatened with exile by Modestus, he said, “I know no banishment, who have no abiding-place here in the world. I do not count this place mine, nor can I say the other is not mine, rather all is God’s, whose stranger and pilgrim I am.”

“For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country” (Heb 11:14). In these words a logical inference is drawn from the last clause of the preceding verse, which supplies a valuable hint on how the Scriptures are to be expounded. The apostle here makes known unto us what was signified by the confession of the patriarchs. Just as the negative implies the positive—“Thou shalt not covet” (Exo 20:17). meaning also, “Thou shalt be content with what God has given”—so for saints to conduct themselves as strangers and pilgrims, and that unto the end of their sojourning in this world, makes manifest the fact that they are journeying heavenwards. “This is the genuine and proper way of interpreting Scripture. When from the words themselves, considered with relation to the persons speaking them and to all their circumstances, we declare what was their determinate mind and sense” (John Owen).

“For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country” (Heb. 11:14). Their confession of strangership implied more than that they had not yet entered their promised inheritance, it likewise showed they were earnestly pressing toward it. They had every reason so to do. It was their own “country,” for it was there God had blest them with all spiritual blessings before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3-4), it was from there they had been born again (Joh 3:3, margin), it was there that their Father, Savior, and fellow-saints dwell. To “seek” the promised inheritance denotes that earnest quest of the believer after that which he supremely desires. It is this which distinguishes him from the empty professor. The latter desires that which is good for himself, as Balaam said, “Let me die the death of the righteous” (Num 23:10), but only the regenerate can truly say, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” (Psa 27:4).

To “seek” after heaven must be the chief aim and supreme task which the Christian sets before him—laying aside all that would hinder and using every means which God has appointed. The world must be held loosely, the affections be set upon things above, and the heart constantly exercised about treading the narrow way, which alone leads thither. “Seek a country”—“Their designs are for it, their desires are after it, their discourses about it. They diligently endeavor to clear up their title to it, to have their temper suited to it, and have their conversation in it, and come to the enjoyment of it” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Heaven is here called a “country” because of its largeness. It is a pleasant country, the land of uprightness, rest and joy. May divine grace conduct both writer and reader into it.

# THE LIFE OF DAVID

## 15. His Address to Saul

In our last article, we left the apostate king of Israel asleep in the cave of Engedi, the very place which had been made a refuge by David and his followers. There Saul lay completely at the mercy of the man whose life he sought. David's men were quick to perceive their advantage and said to their master, "Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee" (1Sa 24:4).

A real temptation presented itself to the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and though he was not completely overcome by it, yet he did not emerge from the conflict without a wound and a stain. "Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily" (1Sa 24:4). How true it is that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1Co 15:33)! Did this incident come back to his mind when, (probably) at a later date, the Spirit of God moved him to write, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" (Psa 1:1)? Possibly so, at any rate, we find here a solemn warning which each of us does well to take to heart.

"And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt" (1Sa 24:5), which means his conscience accused him and he repented of what he had done. Good is it when our hearts condemn us for what the world regards as trifles. Though David had done no harm to the king's person, and though he had given proof it was in his power to slay him, nevertheless, his action was a serious affront against the royal dignity. No matter what the personal character of the ruler, because of his office, God commands us to "honor the king" (1Pe 2:17). This is a word concerning which all of us need reminding, for we are living in times when an increasing number "despise dominion, and *speak evil* of dignities" (Jude 1:8). God takes note of this!

"David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt." (1Sa 24:5). With this should be compared 2 Samuel 24:10, "And David's heart smote him after that he numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." From these passages it is evident that David was blest with a tender conscience, which is ever a mark of true spirituality. In solemn contrast therefrom, we read of those "having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1Ti 4:2), and of some "being past feeling" (Eph 4:19), which is a sure index of those who have been abandoned by God. David soon regretted his rash action and realized he had sinned. May God graciously grant unto reader and writer a sensitive conscience.

"And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD" (1Sa 24:6). How honest of David! He not only repented before God of his rash conduct,

but he also confessed his wrongdoing unto those who had witnessed the same. It requires much grace and courage to do this, yet nothing short of it is required of us. Moreover, we know not to whom God may be pleased to bless a faithful and humble acknowledgment of our sins. David now let his men know plainly that he was filled with abhorrence for having so insulted his sovereign lord. Observe how that it was his looking at things from the *divine* viewpoint which convicted him. He now regarded Saul not as a personal enemy, but as one whom *God* had appointed to reign as long as he lived.

“So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul” (1Sa 24:7). “Stayed” here signifies pacified or quieted them, hindering them from laying rough hands upon the king. The first word of this verse is deeply significant, “So,” in this manner, by what he had just said—how evident that God clothed his words with power! Few things have greater weight with men than their beholding of *reality* in those who bear the name of the Lord. David had honored God by calling the attention of his men to the fact that Saul was His “anointed,” and now He honored David by causing his honest confession to strike home to the hearts of his men. Thus, by restraining his follower,s David returned good for evil to him from whom he had received evil for good.

“But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way” (1Sa 24:7). Utterly unconscious of the danger which had threatened him, the king awoke, arose, and went forth out of the cave. How often there was but a step betwixt us and death, and we knew it not. Awake or asleep, our times are in God’s hands, and with the Psalmist, faith realizes, *Thou* holdest my soul in life, see Psa 66:9. None can die a moment before the time his Maker has appointed. Blessed is it when the heart is enabled to rest in God. Each night it is our privilege to say, “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety” (Psa 4:8). But how unspeakably solemn is the contrast between the cases of the godly and the wicked. The one is preserved for eternal glory, the other is reserved unto everlasting fire. Such was the difference between David and Saul.

“David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king” (1Sa 24:8). “Though he would not take the opportunity to slay him, yet he wisely took the opportunity, if possible, to slay his enmity, by convincing him that he was not such a man as he took him for” (Matthew Henry). In thus revealing himself to Saul, David intimated that he still entertained an honorable opinion of his sovereign. This was further evidenced by the respectful language which he employed. “And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.” How surprised the bloodthirsty monarch must have been in hearing himself addressed by the one whose life he sought! The posture of David was not that of a cringing criminal, but of a loyal subject. In what follows we have one of the most respectful, pathetic, and forcible addresses ever made to one of earth’s rulers.

“And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men’s words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?” (1Sa 24:9). It is beautiful to see how David commenced his speech to the king, wherein he endeavors to show how much he was wronged in being so relentlessly persecuted, and how much he desired Saul to be reconciled to him. Most graciously did David throw the blame upon Saul’s courtiers, rather than on the king himself. In the question here asked Saul, it was suggested that his prejudice against David had been provoked by slanderous reports from others. Herein important instruction is furnished us as to what method to follow when seeking to subdue the malice of those who hate us. Proceeding on the assumption that it is not the individual’s own enmity against us, but that it has been unjustly stirred up by others. Particularly does this apply to

those in authority. Respect is due unto them and where they err, due allowance should be made for their having been ill-informed by others.

It is the practical application of the teaching of Scripture to the details of our own lives which is so much needed today. Of what real value is a knowledge of its history or an understanding of its prophecies, if they exert no vital influence upon our conduct? God has given us His Word not only for our information, but as a law to walk by, and every chapter in it contains important rules for us to appropriate and put into practice. What is before us above supplies a timely case in point. How often differences arise between men, breaches between friends, and misunderstandings between fellow-Christians, and how rarely do we see the spirit displayed by David unto Saul exercised now in efforts to effect a reconciliation! Let us earnestly seek grace to profit from the lovely and lowly example here set before us.

“Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD’S anointed” (1Sa 24:10). First, David had refrained from reproaching or sharply expostulating Saul, now he shows that there was no ill-will in his own heart against him. He appealed to the most decisive proof that he had no intention of injuring him. The king had been completely at his mercy, and his men had urged him to dispatch his enemy, but pity for the helpless monarch had restrained him. Moreover, the fear of God governed him and he dared not to lay violent hands upon His “anointed.” By such mild measures did David seek to conciliate his foe. Let us take a leaf out of his copybook and seek by acts of kindness to prove unto those that harbor false thoughts against us that Satan has misled them.

“Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it (1Sa 24:11). “He produceth undeniable evidence to prove the falseness of the suggestion upon which Saul’s malice against him was grounded. David was charged with seeking Saul’s hurt, ‘see,’ saith he, ‘yea, see the skirt of thy robe,’ let this be a witness for me, and an unexceptional witness it is. Had that been true which I am accused of, I had now had thy head in my hand, and not the skirt of thy robe, for I could as easily have cut off that as this” (Matthew Henry). Well for us is it when we can go to one filled with unjust suspicions against us and confirm our words with convincing proofs of our good will.

It is very touching to see David here reminding Saul that there was a more intimate relation between them than that of king and subject. He had been united in marriage to his daughter and therefore does he now address him as “my father” (1Sa 24:11). Here was an appeal not only to his honor, but to his affection. From a monarch one may expect justice, but from a parent, we may surely look for affection. David might have addressed Saul by a hard name, but he sought to “overcome evil with good.” Blessedly did he here prefigure his Lord, who, at the time of his arrest in the garden, addressed the treacherous Judas not as “Betrayor” or “Traitor,” but “Friend.” Nothing is gained by employing harsh terms and sometimes “A soft answer turneth away wrath” (Pro 15:1).

“The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee” (1Sa 24:12). David now appealed unto a higher court. First, he desires that Jehovah Himself shall make it appear who was in the right and who in the wrong. Second, he counts upon the retribution of heaven if Saul should continue to persecute him. Third, he affirms his steadfast resolution that no matter what he might suffer, nor what opportunities might be his to avenge himself, he would not do him hurt, but leave it with God to requite the evil. This was

indeed a mild method of reasoning with Saul and the least offensive way of pointing out to him the injustice of his conduct. If men would deal thus with one another how much strife could be avoided and how many quarrels be satisfactorily ended!

“As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee” (1Sa 24:13). This intimates that it is permissible for us to make a right use of the wise sayings of others, particularly of the ancients, even though they are not directly inspired of God. Such aphorisms as, “Look before you leap,” “Too many cooks spoil the broth,” “All is not gold that glitters,” are likely to stand us in good stead if they are stored in the memory and duly pondered. In days gone by, such proverbs were frequently spoken in the hearing of children (we are thankful that they were in ours) and the general absence of them today is only another evidence of the decadence of our times.

“As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.” (1Sa 24:13). The use which David here made of this proverb is obvious. He reminds Saul that a man is revealed by his actions. As a tree is known by its fruits, so our conduct makes manifest the dispositions of our hearts. It was as though David said, “Had I been the evil wretch which you have been made to believe, I would have had no conscience of taking away your life when it was in my power. But I could not—my heart would not let me.” Though the dog barks at the sheep, the sheep do not snap back at the dog.

“After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea” (1Sa 24:14). Here David descends and reasons with Saul on the lowest grounds. In your own judgment I am a worthless fellow, then why go to so much trouble over me! Is it not altogether beneath the dignity of a monarch to take so much pains in hunting after one who is not worthy of his notice? In likening himself to a “flea,” David, by this simile, depicts not only his own weakness, but the circumstances he was in. Obligated to move swiftly from place to place and therefore not easily taken, and if captured, of no value to the king. Why then be so anxious to give chase to one so inconspicuous? “To conquer him would not be his honor, to attempt it only his disparagement. If Saul would consult his own reputation he would slight such an enemy (supposing he were really his enemy), and would think himself in no danger from him.” If Saul had a spark of generosity in him, the humble carriage of David here would surely abate his enmity.

“The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand” (1Sa 24:15). Having pleaded his case so forcibly, David now solemnly warned his enemy that Jehovah would judge righteously between them, deliver him out of his hand, and avenge his cause upon him. When we are innocent of the suspicions entertained against and preferred upon us, we need not fear to leave the issue with God. This is what our Lord Himself did, “When he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1Pe 2:23). Assured that God would, in due time, vindicate him, David acted faith upon Him and rested in His faithfulness. The justice of God should ever be the refuge and comfort of those who are wrongfully oppressed. The day is coming when the Judge of all the earth shall recompense every evil-doer and reward all the righteous.

A brief analysis of what we may term David’s “defense,” teaches us what methods we should follow when seeking to show a person that we have given no cause for his malice against us. First, David asked Saul if he had not been unjust in listening to slanders against him (v. 9)? Second, he pointed out that because the fear of God was upon him, he dared not sin presumptuously (v. 10). Third, he appealed to his own actions in proof thereof (v. 11). Fourth, he affirmed he had no intention to retaliate and return evil for evil (v. 12). Fifth, he argued that the

known character of a person should prevent others from believing evil reports about him (v. 13). Sixth, he took a lowly place, shaming pride by humility (v. 14). Seventh, he committed his case unto the justice of God (v. 15).

## COMING TO CHRIST

### Part 3

We trust that sufficient has been said in the previous articles to make clear unto every Christian reader that the saving “coming to Christ” of a poor sinner is neither by physical or mental act, but is wholly spiritual and supernatural—that that act springs not from human reason or human will-power, but from the secret and efficacious operations of God the Spirit. We say clear unto “the Christian reader,” for we must not expect the unregenerate to perceive that of which they have no personal experience. The distinction pointed out in the second half of the last article (the whole of which may well be carefully re-read) between a sound intellectual knowledge of Christ and a vital and transforming knowledge of Him, between knowing Christ as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and as He is divinely revealed *in* us (Gal 1:16), is not one which will appeal to the carnal mind, rather it is one which will be contemptuously rejected. But instead of being surprised at this, we should expect it.

Were our last article sent to the average “Fundamentalist” preacher or “Bible teacher,” and a request made for his honest opinion of it, in all probability he would say that the writer had lapsed into either “mysticism” or “fanaticism.” Just as the religious leaders of Christ’s day rejected His spiritual teachings, so the “champions of orthodoxy,” those who boast so loudly that *they* are faithfully and earnestly contending for the faith, will not receive the humbling and searching messages of Christ’s servants today. The substance of this article would be ridiculed by them. But their very ridicule only serves to demonstrate the solemn truth of 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.” These words have puzzled some who have thoughtfully pondered them, for they do not seem to square with the patent facts of observation.

We have personally met the most conscienceless men—untruthful, dishonest, not scrupling to use tactics which many a non-professor would scorn—who, nevertheless, ardently proclaimed the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, salvation by grace alone. We have had personal dealings with men whose hearts were filled with covetousness and whose ways were worldly almost to the last degree, yet who tiraded against “modernism” and “evolutionism” etc., and “faithfully preached” the Virgin-birth and the blood of Christ as the sinner’s only hope. That these men are “natural” or “carnal,” that is, unregenerate, is plain and unmistakable if we measure them by the infallible rule of Holy Writ. It would not only be a contradiction in terms, but *blasphemy* to say such had been made, by God, “new creatures in Christ.” Nevertheless, so far from the foundation truths of Scripture being “foolishness” unto these unregenerate characters, they warmly endorse and ardently propagate them.

But what has been said above *does not* clash, to the slightest degree, with 1 Corinthians 2:14, when that verse be rightly read and understood. Let it be carefully noted that it does not say the “things of *God* are foolishness” unto the natural man. Had it done so, the writer had been at a complete loss to explain it. No, it declares that the “things of *the Spirit* of God” are foolishness, and what has been said above only serves to illustrate the minute accuracy of this verse. The “things of God” these men profess to believe. The “things of Christ” they appear to valiantly champion, but the “things of *the Spirit* of God,” they are personal strangers unto. And therefore, when His secret and mysterious work upon the souls of God’s elect is pressed upon them, they appear to be so much “foolishness” unto them—either “mysticism” or “fanaticism.” But to the renewed it is far otherwise.

The Spirit’s supernatural operations in the implanting of faith in God’s elect (Col 2:12) produces a “new creation.” Salvation by faith is wrought through the Spirit’s working effectually with the Gospel. Then it is that He *forms* Christ in the soul (Gal 4:19) and lets in the object of faith through the eye of faith, a real “image” of Christ being directly stamped upon the newly quickened soul, which quickening has given ability to discern Christ. Thus, Christ is “formed” in the heart, after the manner that an outward object is formed in the eye. When I say that I have a certain man or object in my eye, I do not mean that this man or object is in my eye *locally*—that is impossible, but they are in my eye objectively—I see them. So, when it is said that Christ is “formed *in us*,” that Christ is “*in you the hope of glory*” (Col 1:27), it is not to be understood that He who is now corporeally at the right hand of God, is *locally and substantially* formed in us. No, but that Christ at the right hand of God, the substance and *object* of faith, is by the Spirit let in from above, so that the soul sees Him by the eye of faith, exactly as He is represented in the Word. So Christ is “formed” in us and thus He “may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17).

What we have endeavored to set forth above is beautifully adumbrated in the lower and visible world. It is indeed striking to discover how much of God’s spiritual works are shadowed out in the material realm. If our minds were but more spiritual and our eyes engaged in a keener lookout, we should find signs and symbols on every side of the invisible realities of God. On a sunny day, when a man looks into clear water, he sees there a face (his own), formed by representation, which directly answers to the fact outside and above the water. There are not two faces, but one, original and yet represented. But only one face is seen, casting its own single image upon the water. So it is in the soul’s history of God’s elect, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed into the same image* from glory to glory, even *as by the Spirit* of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). Oh that His image in us may be more evident to others. We are now ready to turn to,

### III. With Our Affections.

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” (Joh 6:37), declared the Lord Jesus. He who, before the foundation of the world, gave the *persons* of His people unto Christ, now gives them, in regeneration, a *heart* for Christ. The “heart” includes the affections as well as the understanding. In our last article, we pointed out how that no man will (or can) “come to Christ” while ignorant of Him. It is equally true that no man will (or can) “come to Christ” while his affections are alienated from Him. Not only is the understanding of the natural man shrouded in total darkness, but his heart is thoroughly opposed to God. “The carnal mind is enmity [not merely “at enmity,” but “enmity” itself] against God” (Rom 8:7). And “enmity” is something more than a train of hostile thoughts, it is the hatred of the affections themselves. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit makes a man a “new creature in Christ,” He not only renews his understanding, but He radically changes the heart.



When faith gives us a sight of spiritual things, the heart is warmed with love to them. Note the order in Hebrews 11:13, where, in connection with the patriarchs' faith in God's promises, we are told, "were persuaded of them, and *embraced* them," which is a term denoting great affections. When the understanding is renewed by the Spirit, then the heart is drawn unto Christ with a tender desire for Him. When the Holy Spirit is pleased to make known in the soul the wondrous love of Christ to me, then love unto Him is begotten and goes out toward Him in return. Observe the order in 1 John 4:16, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The apostle places knowledge (not intellectual, but spiritual) before faith, and both before a union and communion with divine love. The light and knowledge of Christ and heaven which we have by tradition, education, hearing, or reading, never fires the affections. But when the love of God is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5), O what a difference is produced!

Far too little emphasis has been placed upon this aspect of our subject. In proof of this assertion, weigh carefully the following question. Why is it that "He that *believeth not* shall be damned" (Mar 16:16) is quoted a hundred times more frequently by preachers and tract-writers than "If any man *love not* the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" [accursed] (1Co 16:22)? If we are to properly preserve the balance of truth, we must note carefully the manner in which the Holy Spirit has rung the changes on "believe" and "love" in the New Testament. Consider the following verses, "All things work together for good to them that [not "trust," but] *love* God" (Rom 8:28). "The things which God hath prepared for them that [not only "believe," but] *love* Him" (1Co 2:9). "But if any man *love* God, the same is known [or "approved"] of him" (1Co 8:3). "A crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that [not "believe in," but] *love* his appearing" (2Ti 4:8). "The crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that *love* him" (Jam 1:12). "Heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that *love* him" (Jam 2:5). "He that *loveth not* knoweth not God; for God is love" (1Jo 4:8).

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Joh 6:44). In our last article, we saw that this "drawing" consists, in part, of the Spirits' supernatural enlightenment of the understanding. It also consists in the Spirit's inclining the affections unto Christ. He acts upon sinners agreeably to their nature—not by external force, such as is used on an unwilling animal, but by spiritual influence or power moving their inward faculties, "I drew them with cords of a *man*, with bands of *love*" (Hos 11:4)—by rational conviction of their judgment, by showing them that there is infinitely more goodness and blessedness in Christ than in the creature or the sinful gratification of carnal desires, by winning their hearts to Christ, by communicating to them a powerful sense of His superlative excellency, and complete suitability unto all their needs. To them that "believe, he is *precious*" (1Pe 2:7)—so precious, they are willing to part with the world and everything that they may "win Christ" (Phi 3:8).

As was shown at some length in the opening article, the affections of the natural man are alienated from God, wedded to the things of time and sense, so that he will not come to Christ. Though God's servants seek to charm him with the lovely music of the Gospel, like the adder he closes his ear. It is as the Lord portrayed it in the parable of the Great Supper, "They all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luk 14:18), one preferring his lands, another his merchandise, another his social recreation. And nothing short of the Almighty power and working of the Holy Spirit in the heart can break the spell which sin and Satan has cast over man, and turn his heart from perishing objects to an imperishable one. This He does in God's elect by His secret and invincible operations, sweetly working in and alluring them by revealing Christ to them in the

winsomeness of His person and the infinite riches of His grace, by letting down His love into their hearts, and by moving them to lay hold of His kind invitations and precious promises.

Most blessedly is this represented to us in, “My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him” (Song. 5:4). Here the door of the heart (Act 16:14), or more specifically, the “door of faith” (Act 14:27), is seen shut against Christ and the object of His love being so loath and unwilling as to rise and open to Him. But though unwelcome, His love cannot be quenched, and He gently enters (He does not burst the door open!) uninvited. His “hand” opening the “door” is a figure of His efficacious grace removing every obstacle in the heart of His elect (cf. Act 11:21), and winning it to Himself. The effect of His gracious entry, by His Spirit, is seen in the “and my bowels were moved for him,” which is a figure of the stirring of the affections after Him—cf. Isaiah 63:15, Philemon 1:12. For the thoughts of this paragraph, we are indebted to the incomparable commentary of John Gill on the Song of Solomon.

O what a miracle of grace has been wrought when the heart is truly turned from the world unto God, from self unto Christ, from love of sin unto love of holiness! It is this which is the fulfillment of God’s covenant promise in Ezekiel 36:26, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” There is no man that loves money so much, but that he is willing to part with it, for that which he values more highly than the sum he parts with to purchase it. The natural man esteems material things more highly than he does spiritual, but the regenerated loves Christ more than all other objects beside, and this, because he has been made a “new creature.” It is a spiritual love which binds the heart to Christ.

It is not simply a knowledge of the truth which saves, but a *love* of it which is the essential prerequisite. This is clear from 2 Thessalonians 2:10, “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” Close attention must be paid unto those words or a wrong conclusion may be drawn. It is not a love *for* the truth, but a love *of* the truth. There are those who have the former, who are destitute of the latter. We have met Russellites and have boarded with Christadelphians, who put many a real Christian to shame. People, who after a long day’s work, spent the whole evening in diligently studying the Bible. Nor was it just to satisfy curiosity. Their zeal had lasted for years. Their Bible was as precious to them as a devout Romanist’s “beads” or “rosary” are. So too there is a *natural* “love” for Christ, an ardent devotion for Him, which springs not from a renewed heart. Just as one reared among devout Romanists, grows up with a deep veneration and genuine affection for the Virgin, so one carefully trained by Protestant parents, told from infancy that Jesus loves him, grows up with a real but natural love for Him.

There may be an historical faith in all the doctrines of Scripture, where the power of them is never experienced. There may be a fleshly zeal for portions of God’s truth (as there was in the case of the Pharisees) and yet the heart not be renewed. There may be joyous emotions felt by a superficial reception of the Word (as there was in the stony-ground hearers, Matthew 13:20), where the “root of the matter” (Job 19:28) be lacking. Tears may flow freely at the pathetic sight of the suffering Savior (as with the company of women who bewailed Christ as He journeyed to the cross, Luke 23:27-28), and yet the heart be as hard as the nether millstone toward God. There may be a rejoicing in the light of God’s truth (as was the case with Herod, Mark 6:20) and yet hell never be escaped from.

Since then there is a “love for the truth” in contradistinction from a “love of the truth,” and a natural love for Christ in contrast from a spiritual love of Him, how am I to be sure which mine is? We may distinguish between these “loves” thus, first, the one is partial, the other is impartial. The one esteems the doctrines of Scripture but not the duties it enjoins, the promises of Scripture

but not the precepts, the blessings of Christ but not His claims, His priestly office but not His kingly rule. But not so with the spiritual lover. Second, the one is occasional, the other is regular. The former balks when personal interests are crossed, not so the latter. Third, the one is evanescent and weak, the other lasting and powerful. The former quickly wanes when other delights compete and prevails not to control the other affections. The latter rules the heart and is strong as death. Fourth, the former betters not its possessor. The latter transforms the life.

That a saving “coming to Christ” *is* the affections being turned to and fixed upon Him, may be further demonstrated from the nature of backsliding, which begins with the heart’s departure from Christ. Observe how this is traced to its real source in Revelation 2:4, “Thou hast left [not “lost”] thy first *love*.” The reality and genuineness of our *returning* to Christ is evidenced by the *effects* which the workings of the understanding produce upon the affections. A striking example of this is found in Matthew 26:75, “And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.” That “remembrance” was not merely an historical, but a gracious one—his heart was melted by it. So it ever is when the Holy Spirit works in and “renews” us. I may recall a past sin, without being duly humbled thereby. I may “remember” Christ’s death in a mechanical and speculative way, without the affections being truly moved. It is only as the faculty of our understanding is quickened by the Holy Spirit that the heart is powerfully impressed.

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 2. The Purpose of God

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15). An elaborate system of error has been built upon an erroneous exegesis of this verse. It has been assumed that the servants of God are there bidden to sectionize the Scriptures, marking out the boundaries of that which pertained each dispensation, and allocating to different companies various parts of the Word of God. It has been supposed that the ability of a man to open up the living oracles is to be determined mainly by his skill to erect arbitrary hedges and shut out the sheep of Christ from the larger portion of the green pastures which God has given them to feed in. Some have carried this pernicious method farther than others, but it is generally agreed that practically all of the Old Testament and the four Gospels are “not for us,” pertaining only to those who lived in previous dispensations.

Now if *the context* of 2 Timothy 2:15 be examined, it will be found that that verse has no more to do with the drawing of lines between the “dispensations” than it has with distinguishing between stars of varying magnitude. There is absolutely nothing in the entire context which, to the slightest degree, favors the strange meaning which has been given to that verse. The plain significance of 2 Timothy 2:15 is interpreted for us by Luke 12:42-43, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so

doing.” We cannot do better than quote here from one of the Puritans—a company of God’s servants who were endowed with far more spirituality, wisdom, and ability to feed Christ’s sheep, than are we in this decadent age:—

“Ministers are stewards in the house of God and dispensers of the mysteries thereof, and therefore, it is required of them, that they give unto all the servants that are in the house, or do belong unto it, *a meet portion*, according unto their wants, occasions, and services, suitable unto the will and wisdom of their Lord and Master. This giving of provision, and a portion of meat unto the household of Christ, consists principally in the right dividing and distribution of the Word of truth. It is the taking out from those great stores of it in the Scripture and as it were *cutting off a portion* suitable unto the various conditions of those in the family. Herein consists the principal skill of a servant furnished for the kingdom of Christ, with the wisdom before described. And without this, a common course of dispensing or preaching the Word, without differencing of persons and truths, however it may be guilded over with a flow of words and oratory, is shameful work in the house of God.

“Now unto this skill, sundry things are required. (1.) A sound judgment in general concerning the state and condition of those unto whom any one is so dispensing the Word. It is the duty of a shepherd to know the state of his flock. (2.) An acquaintance with the ways and methods of the work of God’s grace on the minds and hearts of men, that he may pursue and comply with its design in the ministry of the Word. (3.) An acquaintance with the nature of temptation, with the especial hindrances of faith and obedience which may befall those unto whom the Word is dispensed. (4.) A right understanding of the nature of spiritual diseases, distempers, and sicknesses, with their proper cures and remedies belonging thereunto. For the want hereof, the hearts of the wicked are oftentimes made glad in the preaching of the Word, and those of the righteous filled with sorrow—the hands of sinners are strengthened and those who are looking towards God are discouraged or turned out of the way.” (John Owen).

To our dear brethren in the ministry, especially the younger ones, we would respectfully urge the prayerful pondering of the above quotation. It is in the attending to such vital considerations that the preacher may best be guided in the selection of his themes and the material for his sermons. If he is to “speak a word in season to him that is weary” (Isa 50:4)—weary of the incessant conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, weary of resisting the continual assaults of Satan, weary of so often confessing to God his repeated failures and falls (tempted to give up in despair). It is to these spiritual problems he had best direct his attention. Ah, my brethren, you will bring more joy to the heart of the great Shepherd and be of far more real help unto His people, by seeking from Him messages suited to their hearts, than by taxing your ingenuity to allot one part of Matthew’s Gospel to the people of Christ’s day, another to the “Jewish remnant” in the tribulation period, and still another to “the millennium.”

It is true that the making of a *practical* application of *all* parts of God’s Word to the varied cases of different souls is not the whole work to which the minister of the Gospel is called, nevertheless, if that be neglected, he is most certainly a physician of no value (Job 13:4). It is also true that the *interpretation* of Holy Writ forms an essential part of a minister’s labor, and that for this an intelligent grasp of God’s purpose and plan is of prime importance. Yet here too there is a great danger of erring. Many *have* erred, and erred grievously, for *their starting point is wrong!* No man can obtain a correct view of God’s “program” by taking his stand in the Garden of Eden. To *start* with “the Adamic dispensation” can lead to nothing but confusion. It is an ominous fact that the great majority of “Dispensationalists,” the men who boast of their ability to “rightly

divide the word of truth,” take the creation of man as the commencement of their scheme or system. This at once betrays a woeful ignorance and brands them as incompetent guides.

The key to all of God’s works and ways is *the everlasting covenant*. Long before Adam was made, yea before heaven and earth were created, the Triune God formed His great “purpose” and “plan.” The center of all the divine counsels is Christ, the God-man Mediator, He is “the brightness[or effulgence] of God’s glory” (Heb 1:3). A revenue of infinite honor and praise was to accrue unto God by the wondrous work which the Redeemer would undertake. In eternity past, a people was given to Him, predestinated to be conformed to His image (Rom 8:29), and in eternity to come, He will “shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness” toward them “through Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:7). This is the “eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:11), and the stupendous part which Christ was to play in the bringing of this to pass was all determined and fixed in that “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure” (2Sa 23:5).

Now *all* of God’s works have this one end in view, namely, the glory of Christ in the redemption of His chosen people, not only in the actual purchasing of redemption, but in all that was preparatory to that purchase, as also in securing the success of it. So too all that Christ does in the discharge of His Mediatorship, in His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, either before He became incarnate, during the days of His flesh, or since, and also all that the Father or the Holy Spirit has done before or since the cross, unite in this grand design. Every act of God in creation, providence, or grace, has been wrought in view of the ultimate execution of the eternal covenant of redemption. The various works or dispensations belonging to it, are but parts of one grand whole. It is a single design that was formed, to which all the offices of Christ do directly tend, and in which all the persons of the Trinity do cooperate.

The persons of the Trinity confederated in the great design of redemption. A covenant was entered into between them. In that covenant, the Father appointed the Son, the Son undertaking to work, all things in that work being stipulated and agreed upon. The Holy Spirit pledging Himself for the effectual application of the same unto its predestined beneficiaries. This it is which supplies the key to or throws light upon and explains all the consequent divine actions. The world itself was created in order thereto, for the world was to be the platform or theater on which the great work of redemption was to be wrought out (1Co 4:9). The work of creation was in order to the work of providence, as the building of a house or the making of a machine is for the *use* that is to be made of it; and the center of all God’s providential workings is the glorification of the Mediator in the eternal redemption of that people which was given to Him before the foundation of the world.

*The creation of heaven* was in order to the work of redemption, for it was to be the habitation of the redeemed, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34). The angels too were created to be employed in this work, and therefore are we told that they are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). Moreover, it is by means of the wondrous work of redemption that the heavenly hierarchies are being taught the wondrous ways of God, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10).

*The entrance of sin* was in order to the work of redemption. As the darkness of night is required in order to display the shining stars of the firmament, so sin was needed as a black background to bring out into plainer relief the surpassing love of God unto His own people. As weakness is a foil for strength, ignorance for wisdom, so the Fall of the creature has demonstrated

that man's extremity is God's opportunity. The more desperate the case of the patient, the better occasion has the competent physician to exhibit his skill. The more wretched and unworthy be the object, the more is the favor shown to him enhanced. How can mercy be exercised where there is no transgression? Is not power most clearly seen when formidable obstacles have to be overcome? It was the divine permission of sin to enter the world which provided opportunity for God to more grandly reveal His wondrous attributes.

*The government of this world* has in view the great work of redemption. God is making all things "work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). Take the building of a large house. What a number of workmen are employed, what a variety of materials are used. If we view their actions singly and separately, there seems to be no relation between their labors. One group is engaged in the forest felling trees, another in the kiln making bricks, another in the shop making glass, another in the laboratory mixing paint, another in the plant manufacturing telephone wires, etc., etc. But each is needed, each makes his own essential contribution—all combine to produce the finished house.

Let us give another illustration. Take the publishing of this little magazine. Its design is to provide spiritual food for some of Christ's scattered sheep. Consider then a few of the wondrous workings and providences of God which make this possible. Trees grew for years that they might be cut down, reduced to pulp, and made into paper. Steel was manufactured and then turned into machines to print, to cut, to fold. Ink too is needed. Railway trains (with all the complicated systems which are necessary to maintain them) must run in a hundred directions to carry these magazines to the varied points of distribution. Yea, many ships must cross thousands of miles of ocean to transfer them to the forty foreign countries to which we send them. Little do the captain and crew of that ship, journeying to a remote island, think that *God* is employing them to carry His messages to one or two of His elect stationed there! Yet so it is!

In all the providential dealings of God, there is "as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel" (Eze 1:16). As we have said above, the great center of all God's counsels and workings is the glorification of Christ, and that in the saving of His people. In the execution of His purpose, many subsidiary acts are performed and many subservient ends are accomplished, but all move forward to the same grand goal. To make this yet clearer to the reader, consider the Lord's delivering of the children of Israel from Egypt. The magnifying of His own great name in the redemption of His people was the chief design before Him. But observe the various factors which entered into the same. Jacob and his family must emigrate from the land of Canaan and become sojourners in Egypt—and that was brought about by a mighty famine. There they must be oppressed and enslaved. To that end God raised up Pharaoh to be the merciless persecutor of them.

We must carefully distinguish between the various features of redemption itself and the parts of that work by which the redemption is wrought out. There is an obvious difference between the benefits procured and bestowed, and the operations of God by which those benefits are procured and bestowed. Thus in the case last cited—the difference was marked between the benefit which Israel received and the parts of God's work by which it was wrought. The benefit which Israel received consisted of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage and misery, and their being brought into a more happy state as the servants of God and heirs of Canaan. But in order to that there was the calling of Moses, his mission to Pharaoh, the king's obstinacy, the signs and wonders which were wrought before him, with all of God's terrible judgments on his land and people.

Let us now mention some of the principal things which the Triune God designed to be accomplished by the Mediator's work of redemption. First, it was to subdue all God's enemies,

for He has decreed that the triumph of His goodness over evil shall finally appear, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8), and “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1Co 15:25). Second, to restore all the effects of the Fall so far as concerned the elect part of mankind. Originally, man was created in the likeness of God, but the Fall ruined his soul, corrupted his nature, and sank him into spiritual death. Now when the work of redemption is completed, the people of God shall be perfectly conformed unto the image of His Son in spirit and soul and body. Third, to gather together in one all of God’s elect angels and men, Ephesians 1:10.

During the interval of time between the Fall and the incarnation of Christ, the works of God were so many forerunners and earnest of the Mediator’s advent and preparatory to the work of redemption. There were many great changes and revolutions in the world, yet were they all the turnings of the wheels of providence in order to the coming of Christ into the world. The saints who were saved during those early ages were so many pledges of the future harvest. God wrought many lesser deliverances for them, and these were so many types and foreshadowings of the great salvation which the Redeemer was to work out. God was pleased to reveal Himself to one and another, from time to time, and communicate revelations of light to them. Yet that light was more like that of the moon and stars at nighttime, in comparison with the rising of the Sun of righteousness (Mal 4:2). (Continued in the April issue).

## CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

### Part 1

I suppose that every Christian has been exercised at some time or other by verses in Scripture containing the word “perfect” or “perfection.” While convinced that those who lay claim to sinless perfection err, yet probably you have not been fully satisfied by any explanation which you have seen of those verses. For example, take such passages as the following, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1Co 2:6). The Holy Spirit speaking through Paul acknowledges some *are* “perfect,” and He was referring to those still on earth. “This also we wish, even your perfection” (2Co 13:9). That was the desire and longing of the apostle for those saints. Did he wish for something unattainable, impossible? “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...that the man of God may be perfect” (2Ti 3:16,17). Such a verse ought to exercise us. “But the God of all grace...make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10). This too is while we are on earth. “I have not found thy works perfect before God” (Rev 3:2), which clearly intimates they ought to have been. The Ephesians were being rebuked because their works were imperfect.

Such verses as the above have puzzled and troubled many. Honest hearts have been exercised as to the exact meaning of the term “perfect” or “perfection.” I want then, this morning, to try and give you an outline of the teaching of God’s Word on this important subject. Let us turn next to Job 1:1, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect.”

Yet in Job 9:20, Job says, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.” There seems to be a flat contradiction between those two verses. The explanation is simple. The word “perfect” is used in different senses in those two passages. Job 9:20 signifies, if I were to say I am sinless, faultless, absolutely perfect, I should lie. But what is meant in Job 1:1, where God Himself says that he was “a perfect man”? The term there, and in many other passages of the Old Testament, means “sincere, honest.” Such verses speak of a perfection of *sincerity* as opposed to hypocrisy. Compare Ephesians 6:24.

But there are other verses, especially in the New Testament, where that definition does not fit, where the word “perfect” signifies much more than “honest” or “upright,” and which are by no means easy to interpret. I refer to such verses as we looked at in the beginning. Those verses trouble sincere souls, for such feel that they are very imperfect. While it is true that the Christian may be able to rejoice over what he reads in Hebrews 10:14, “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”—yet he mourns and grieves over many imperfections. Coming more closely to our subject, I want to carefully consider what *kind* of “perfection” is attainable in this life by the saint. In Philippians 3:15, Paul says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect,” and yet in the twelfth verse of the same chapter, the apostle affirmed of himself, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Now Scripture does not contradict itself, yet we need to make distinctions, discriminating between things that differ.

1. We must discriminate between *legal and evangelical perfection*. Legal perfection is that complete and constant conformity in desire, thought, word, and deed which God requires from us unto His holy and righteous law. This is the perfection which God demands from every creature—a full and flawless obedience, both internal and external, loving Him with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves, and this, not occasionally, but perpetually. This has been God’s demand in every age and it cannot be lowered. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10), is the divine sentence resting upon every transgressor. There must be a steady perseverance in doing those things which God has commanded and in abstaining from all those things which He has prohibited. But no fallen human being can possibly meet that demand. As Romans 8:3 declares, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.” An imperfect man cannot live perfectly. A sinful creature cannot yield sinless obedience.

Now it is at this point the marvelous grace of God towards His people appears. As Romans 8:3-4 tells us, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” God sent His Son here as *the surety* of His elect to meet the demands of the law by perfectly obeying it in their stead. But does this mean that Christ fulfilled the law for us so that *our* responsibility to the law has been removed? Does it mean that Christ has kept the law so that there is no longer need for *us* to keep it? No, that could not be. God cannot forego His claims and Christ would be the minister of sin if He had introduced a system of lawlessness. What then? Christ has procured for His people the gift of the Holy Spirit and in regeneration, the Spirit begets in our hearts *a love for the law*, a desire after that which is holy and righteous before God, and the real Christian longs to meet God’s claims, walk obediently, and endeavors *to* do so. Through Christ, God accepts this real desire and genuine effort to obey Him. Here then is where we must draw the first distinction on “perfection.” We must discriminate between legal and evangelical perfection.

Legal perfection or sinless obedience was found only in Christ. Evangelical perfection or sincere obedience is found in every Christian. By “sincere obedience” is meant an honest desire



and a real effort to keep the law, please God in all things, not allowing any known sin. Evangelical perfection is primarily a thing of the heart, at which God ever mainly looks. The Christian seeks to please and honor God in all things. I speak of what is characteristic or general of him, that which marks the main tenor of his heart and life. Let me illustrate this point to you. The needle of a ship's compass which is in working order, always points to the north. You may take that compass and jar it, and the needle will swing in another direction, but when that compass regains its level, or the interfering finger is removed, the needle resumes its normal and correct relation. Now the normal condition of the heart of a regenerated person points toward God, seeks God, desires God, aims to please Him. There are times—in the storms of life, in the disturbances of temptation, in the assaults of Satan—when the heart is deflected and turned away from God, and this happens frequently in the experience and life of every Christian for “in many things we offend all” (Jam 3:2). Nevertheless, just as surely as the needle of the compass when released from an interfering power turns again to the north, so the heart of a regenerated person comes to itself, recovers its poise, and instinctively turns back to God.

Now this evangelical perfection has marked God's children in every dispensation. Unto Abraham—the father of all them that believe—the Lord said, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1). That was God's standard then—a heart completely surrendered to His claims, a sincere desire and determination to please Him in all things. “I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and *with a perfect heart*, and have done that which is good in thy sight” (2Ki 20:3). This is a verse which has puzzled many, particularly the words we have placed in italics. Was Hezekiah lying? Can you conceive of a man who was dying turning to the Lord and uttering a deliberate falsehood? Was he mistaken? No. The mistake is ours, if we fail to interpret this in the light of other Scriptures. Hezekiah did not mean that his was a sinless heart, nor one that had never deviated from God, but instead, a heart that, in its deepest depths, in its genuine nature, in its real tenor, desired to please God, and which despite many failures, had sought *to* do so. And this is something which every one that will enter heaven must have.

“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with *a perfect heart and with a willing mind*: for the LORD searcheth all hearts” (1Ch 28:9). Here is another scriptural declaration which helps us to understand the nature of evangelical perfection. The obedience which God requires must be performed readily and not by constraint, with a willing mind. It must be spontaneous and not compulsory. It must proceed from love and not from terror. That obedience which is acceptable to God issues from the gratitude of a renewed heart, and is rendered freely, and not from external constraint. So that to serve Him with “a perfect heart and a willing mind” signifies to obey Him readily and gladly, freely and out of love. As a contrast from 1 Chronicles 28:9 take 2 Chronicles 25:2, “And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, *but not with a perfect heart*.” Amaziah had received a godly training and had acquired certain godly habits. His external conduct was according to God's law, but He who looks within declared that his heart was not perfect—which refers not to a state of sinlessness, but signifies that his heart was not even honest, it did not ring true. There was not a real desire to please God and an ardent effort to carry out that desire. That is very solemn. It makes one think of James 1:8, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways,” and O how many such there are in Christendom today!

Perhaps some amplification of what has just been before us may prove helpful. How often we meet with people who are scarcely the same twice together. They are as variable as the weather. On some occasions they appear to be really spiritual, ready to talk about divine things, anxious to

know the way of the Lord more perfectly, desirous of pleasing Him. But perhaps only a few days later, you find them thoroughly wrapped up in the things of the world, with no appetite at all for spiritual converse. The hearts of such people are like the pendulum of a clock in action, never stationary, ever swinging to and fro. It is as the Lord said of Israel of old, “Their heart is divided” (Hos 10:2)—vacillating between love of self and love of God, fluctuating between occupation with Christ and occupation with the world. O my friends, this is solemn and searching. God will not tolerate a rival. Do not mock Him by seeking to give Him half your heart. Do not insult Him by imagining that you can love Him and the world too. Be either one thing or the other, 1 Kings 18:21, Revelation 3:15.

Now to sum up this first point of distinction. Legal perfection is that sinless perfection which the law demands from man—that absolute, undivided, continuous obedience, both inward and outward, to all its precepts. This strict and faultless obedience Christ rendered unto the law in the stead of and on behalf of His people. Evangelical perfection is that sincere desire of a renewed heart to please God in all things, a desire which is inseparably linked to an honest determination and effort *to* do so. True, that desire is never fully realized by any of us in this life, yet He who looks at and knows the heart, perceives its true and deep longings after Himself, and so, for Christ’s sake, accepts the will for the deed.

2. We must distinguish between *absolute and relative perfection*. And here too the former was found only in Christ, for He alone received the Spirit without measure (Joh 3:34). He is the only one that could truthfully say, “I do *always* those things which please him” (Joh 8:29). How blessed and refreshing it is for our hearts to turn away from the world, from considering our own failures, and contemplate that blessed One who lived here for thirty-three years, the eye of the Father ever upon Him and always seeing that which delighted Him, ever able to say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17). And *Christ* is the standard which God sets before us. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi 2:5). “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21). “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6).

God has set before us a perfect standard, but it is never fully reached by any Christian, for the flesh is still left within us, and “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). Now that very opposition between the flesh and the Spirit in the Christian, issuing in so many failures and sins, causes him to hang his head in shame, groan, and cry, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24). That was true of Paul himself, this was his experience. It was the beloved apostle who said, “O wretched man that I am,” and he said it not before conversion, nor during the early years of his Christian life, but much later on. So with us there is a daily failing and need for a daily forgiveness. Yet, while sinless perfection is unattainable by us now, there *is* a relative perfection which should be reached by the Christian, and which may be attained in this life. Let me seek to define the nature of this.

It is really twofold. First, *as Christians are compared with non-Christians*. In contrast from the unconverted, the saints are subject to Christ. They have surrendered to His Lordship, accepted His yoke, and so are “perfect” in contrast from those who yield not themselves to Him. “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt *be perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Mat 19:21). The obvious meaning of that word was, “If thou wilt be a Christian, if you are anxious to be saved, here is what you must do—go and sell what you have, give to the poor, come and follow me.” In other words, if you wish to enjoy the *privileges* of the Gospel, you must submit to the *rules* of the Gospel. Thus, the

word “perfect” is used here in a relative way, to describe the Christian in contrast from the non-Christian. In Christianity, “perfection” is found in contradistinction from Judaism, see Hebrews 6:1. Judaism was but the blade—Christianity is the full corn in the ear. When one becomes a Christian, he has reached relative “perfection,” in contrast from those who are not Christians.

Before passing on, we had better anticipate a question, suggested by, “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast,” (Mat 19:21). which should be linked up with Luke 14:33. The question is this, does God require me to part with all that I have? The answer is yes and no. Yes, in the sense that God requires me to hold everything that I have at His disposal and it may be that, before many months have passed, He will put some of us to the test. God requires me to hold every object I have in this world at *His* disposal, so that if He makes it clear I am to relieve His poor suffering people to the extent that I should give away every cent, I am to do so. Nothing that I have is *mine* absolutely. This must be recognized and owned. What I have is only loaned me by God. Then does this mean that it is wrong for me to have any money in the bank at the present time? No, it means I am to say, “Lord Thou hast been pleased to prosper me, I have so much on hand, but it is for Thee to say how it shall be used. If it is Thy will for me to keep it, Thy will be done. If it is Thy wish for it to be used in relieving the distress of others, I am ready to do so.” The man who does this has a “perfect” heart. There is no reserve in it, it is fully yielded to God. The man who has not done this is no Christian. He is not regenerated, for his heart treasures gold more than God. If he will not place his gold at God’s disposal, that money is his god—which proves that he is unsaved. When God saves a man, He works in him *a miracle* of grace. He changes the natural character or bent of the heart. It is the natural bent of the heart to hold on to that which we have worked hard to obtain, but the supernatural grace of God makes us willing to lay all at the Lord’s feet.

This is true not only of gold, but of our *children* also. A regenerated person will place each child at the absolute disposal of God, saying, “It is not mine, it is Thine to do with as Thou pleaseth—to enlighten or to leave in darkness, to save and send forth as a missionary to the heathen, or to remain here. It is *Thy* creature and my heart relinquishes all absolute claims upon it.” Everything we have and are must be laid before God and by the heart truly held at His sovereign disposal. This is the nature of *relative* Christian “perfection.” It is the difference between the heart of a converted and an unconverted person.

Second, there is a relative perfection *as one Christian may be compared with other Christians*. Even saints differ much among themselves. Though none attain unto absolute and sinless perfection, yet there are several degrees of grace and diversity of growth among Christians. There are babes, young men, fathers (1Jo 2;13). The strong and mature Christian is relatively “perfect” in contrast from the weak and immature, who has less wisdom to detect error and less strength with which to resist sin and Satan. I want us to look at Scripture in connection with this point. “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro” (Eph 4:14). God is not honored by our remaining spiritual dwarfs. He is not glorified by a Christian continuing a spiritual child all his days. We should outgrow our spiritual babyhood.

“We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1Co 2:6). “Perfect” here means matured, fully grown, in contrast from spiritual babes. The Corinthians were squabbling, one saying, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos.” (1Co 3:4). They were so carnal as to be fighting among themselves. Consequently the apostle said, “I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ” (1Co 3:1). So you see there *are* differences among God’s people. “For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age” (Heb 5:13-

14). “Brethren, be not children in understanding...be men” (1Co 14:20)—act like such. “Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1Co 16:13). Those who are well instructed by the Spirit in the mysteries of the faith, who have made real progress in practical godliness, who are firm and established in their love for God, are comparatively “perfect” in contrast from the “babes” in Christ.

3. There is also a “perfection” *of parts*. Let me illustrate from the physical. A child born minus a limb lacks a complete or perfect body. So one born with two arms and loses one, no longer has a complete or perfect body. Thus it is if a Christian lacks the development of any of the really vital grace. He may have faith, zeal, perseverance, but if he lacks compassion, he is deficient—his spiritual character is maimed. If a Christian has tenderness, patience, great consideration for others, but lacks courage, faithfulness, unflinching righteousness, he is lacking in parts. 2 Peter 1:5-7 is for the correcting of this, inculcating the fully developed Christian character, bidding us cultivate all the graces of the Spirit, and thus be a “perfect” Christian, that is, complete in all his parts. “May grow up into him in *all* things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15)—not only in faith, courage, patience, but in everything.

4. There is also a “perfection” *of degrees* or growth in grace, an advancing from spiritual babyhood to spiritual maturity. “When I was a child, I spake as a child...but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1Co 13:11). See the little one surrounded by its toys in the nursery, Behold the same child fifteen years later—it has no use for those toys, it has outgrown them. So it should be with us spiritually. Look again at an infant. It is easily peeved, it cries at almost anything, that is the characteristic of a “child,” and it is largely the same with a “babe” in Christ—worrying and fretting over trifles. “When I became a man, I *put away* childish things” (1Co 13:11). God help us all to do so.

An address (revised) given by the editor to a little company in the home God has kindly loaned us.

## SOUND THE ALARM

The saddest feature to us which is now presented by the worldwide “Depression,” is not the material destitution which has overtaken millions of our fellow creatures, but the spiritual poverty of so many of our dear brethren and sisters in Christ. They seem to be as helpless as the poor worldlings, and while no doubt they all have faith that God will not let them starve to death, yet they apparently know of nothing better than simply to ask Him to be merciful and give them patience to wait until times get better again. While they cannot be entirely innocent with the Word of God to their own hand, yet we are convinced that they are more to be pitied than blamed. By far the greater part of the guilt rests upon the preachers and “Bible teachers” whom they have sat under during the past twenty years.

If those who were so zealous in denouncing “Modernism,” “Higher Criticism,” “Evolution,” ad lib., ad nauseam, had devoted their energies unto teaching their hearers what it means to *walk with God*, He had been more honored, and they had been more helped. If those who so loudly and

so constantly warned against “Russellism,” “Pentecostalism,” “Eddyism” etc., etc., had been faithful in warning the professing people of God against the sins of covetousness, luxury, and extravagance, and had emphasized the teaching of Scripture upon mortification and the denying of self, though they had not been so popular, far more real good had been accomplished. If those who were so diligent in bidding people “rightly dividing the word of truth,” (2Ti 2:15). and adopt their arbitrary methods of sectioning the Scriptures—allocating this part to a company in the remote past, and another part to some company in the distant future—had shown their congregations how to apply the Scriptures practically unto all the varied details of their lives, we should not now witness the pathetic sign which we do.

Were we to follow our own inclinations, we had much prefer writing along different lines from what we are now doing, but we dare not remain silent any longer. While so many of God’s people are still in danger of being deceived by blind leaders, it is high time to warn those whom our pen can reach. So many seem to think that because a preacher is “sound” on all the “fundamentals,” that his messages must be helpful, that because they hear “faithful” sermons on the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the Virgin birth of Christ, and so on, that their souls are getting just the food they need. This by no means follows. There is “a *time* to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecc 3:1), there is “the present truth” (2Pe 1:12), and there is such a thing as “a word *in season*” (Isa 50:4). The tragic thing is that scarcely any of the present-day leaders recognize or are experimentally equipped to give out such.

We are well aware that the above language is strong and sweeping, but the published programs of the “Bible conferences,” the “subjects” being taken at the “Bible Institutes,” the titles of religious books now being published, all illustrate and demonstrate the truth of what we have said. When we hear of those that are without work and reduced to almost the lowest point of existence, being entertained with lectures on “Daniel’s seventy weeks” and interpretations of the symbols of the Apocalypse, it makes us think of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning! When we hear of the homes of Christians being seized and sold and of other saints being dependent upon *unsaved* relatives, it seem high time that some voice was raised asking the question, Is *that* a testimony which honors Christ? Is that an experience which witnesses unto the *faithfulness of God* to undertake for His own?

Instead of the poor, suffering, bewildered children of God having explained unto them what is signified by the “four horses” of Revelation 6 or who is represented by the “two beasts” of Revelation 13, they need to be shown how to pray down temporal blessings, how to have God working miracles for them, how to bring about the fulfillment of some of His wondrous promises. But who is there that is engaged in such a ministry today? Are there none who are now proving for themselves the sufficiency of God and can point the way for others to do likewise? Yes, here and there, there is one who is experimentally acquainted with the God of Elijah, but O how pathetically few is their number!

Has not God declared that He is ready *to* “show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2Ch 16:9)? Certainly He has and He cannot lie. If then God has *not* shown Himself “strong” on your behalf, and if He is not *now* doing so, then it must be because your heart has not been and is not now “perfect toward Him.” Ah, it is at the *heart* God ever looks! Nor does a “perfect” heart here signify a sinless one—see our article upon “Christian Perfection” in this issue. No, a “perfect” heart is one which genuinely trusts, loves, and obeys God. A “perfect” heart is one which has been weaned from all idols and finds its satisfaction in the Lord Himself.

“Six days shalt thou labor” (Exo 20:9). That is as much a divine command as “The seventh day [after the six—note it does not say, “the seventh day *of the week*”!] is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any [unnecessary] work” (Exo 20:9). But there is many a Christian man who is not working at all. Why? “Because there is none available for him.” Ah, that is the answer a worldling would give. “Because *God* is providing none for him” is better, for that places the emphasis where it rightly belongs. And why is not God obtaining an opening for honorable employment? There must be some reason, nothing happens by chance. If you have asked Him to undertake for you and He has not done so, may not that show you have not His ear!

“Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whither soever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success” (Jos 1:7-8). How many have not “prospered” and do not enjoy “good success”? True, and is the reason far to seek? Have they fulfilled the terms which God has here specified? If not, is not the fault their own? Perhaps someone says *that* promise does not concern *us*. But why not? Is not Joshua 1:5 applied to all Christians in Hebrews 13:5! It is the devil who seeks to persuade us that such *searching* promises as these do not pertain unto Christians today.

“Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in *this* time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mar 10:29-30). Here is a *New* Testament promise which relates to *material* blessings. But mark, it is also a *conditional* one, it is only for those who genuinely put Christ first in their lives, who, at His call, are willing to forsake all things for Him.

Now three things are indispensable if we are to enjoy God’s blessings, rather than suffer His chastisements. First, all known sin—past as well as present—must be repented of, confessed, and forsaken (Pro 28:13). It is unpardoned sins which withhold good things from us (Jer 5:25). This principle has always obtained and will unto the end of time. Second, real trust in the Lord, “According to your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29). Even the promises of God avail us not unless they be personally “embraced” (Heb 11:13). “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (Jam 4:2)—ask not with a real, living, expectant, persistent faith. Third, an honest effort to serve Him. God will not place a premium upon disobedience. In keeping His commandments there is “great reward” (Psa 19:11). True, we do not *purchase* God’s favors, nevertheless, in His moral *government* of the world, He stands pledged to recompense the righteous “in the earth” (Pro 11:31).

The whole history of Israel supplies an illustration of what we have been saying above. God prospered or chastened them in accord with their conduct toward Him. And the principles of His governmental dealings have not changed. When Israel fasted, repented, reformed, and served the Lord wholeheartedly, His rod was removed and His smile again bestowed. There is much in Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah that is most pertinent for us today. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Mat 11:15).



# April

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 4. The Titles of the Holy Spirit

Right views of the divine character lie at the foundation of all genuine and vital godliness. It should, then, be one of our chief quests to seek after the knowledge of God. Without the true knowledge of God, in His nature and attributes, we can neither worship Him acceptably nor serve Him aright. Now the three persons in the Godhead have graciously revealed themselves through a variety of names and titles. The nature of God we are utterly incapable of comprehending, but His person and character may be known. Each name or title that God has appropriated unto Himself is that whereby He reveals Himself unto us and whereby He would have us know and own Him. Therefore, whatever any name of God expresses Him to be, *that He is*, for He will not deceive us by giving Himself a wrong or false name. On this account He requires us to trust in His name, because He will assuredly be found unto us all that His name imports.

The names of God, then, are for the purpose of expressing Him unto us. They set forth His perfections and make known the different relations which He sustains unto the children of men and unto His own favored people. Names are given for this intent, that they might declare what the thing is, to which the name belongs. Thus, when God created Adam and gave him dominion over this visible world, He caused the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air to pass before him, that they might receive names from him (Gen 2:19). In like manner, we may learn of what God is through the names and titles He has taken. By means of them, God spells out Himself to us, sometimes by one of His perfections, sometimes by another. A very wide field of study is here introduced to us, yet we can now say no more than that the prayerful and diligent searcher will find it a highly profitable one to investigate.

What has been said above serves to indicate the importance of the present aspect of our subject. What the Holy Spirit is in His divine person and ineffable character is made known unto us by means of the many names and varied titles which are accorded to Him in Holy Writ. A whole volume, rather than a brief article, might well be devoted to their contemplation. May we be divinely guided in using the limited space which is now at our disposal in writing that which will both magnify the third person in the blessed Trinity, and serve as a stimulus unto our readers to give more careful study and holy meditation to those titles of His which we cannot here consider. Possibly we can help our friends most by devoting our attention to those which are more difficult to apprehend.

The Holy Spirit is designated by a great many names and titles in Scripture which clearly evidence both His personality and deity. Some of these are peculiar to Himself, others He has in common with the Father and the Son, in the undivided essence of the divine nature. While in the wondrous scheme of redemption the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are revealed unto us under *distinct* characters, by which we are taught to ascribe certain operations to one more immediately than to another, yet the agency of each is not to be considered as so detached but that they *cooperate and concur*. For this reason, the third person of the Trinity is called the Spirit of the Father (Joh 14:26) and the Spirit of the Son (Gal 4:6), because, acting in conjunction with the Father and the Son, the operations of the one are in effect the operations of the others and altogether result from the indivisible essence of the Godhead.

First, He is designated, “The Spirit,” which expresses two things. First, His divine nature, for “God is a Spirit” (Joh 4:24), as the Thirty-nine Articles of the Episcopal Church well express it, “without body, parts, or passions.” He is essentially pure, incorporeal Spirit, as distinct from any material or visible substance. Second, it express His mode of operation on the hearts of the people of God, which is compared in Scripture to a “breath” or the movement of the “wind”—both of which adumbrate Him in this lower world. Suitably so, inasmuch as they are invisible and yet vitalizing elements. “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live” (Eze 37:9). Therefore was it that, in His public descent on the day of Pentecost, “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting” (Act 2:2).

Second, He is called by way of eminency, “The Holy Spirit,” which is His most usual appellation in the New Testament. Two things are included. First, respect is had unto His nature. As Jehovah is distinguished from all false gods thus, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness” (Exo 15:11), so is the Spirit called Holy to denote the holiness of His nature. This appears plainly in Mark 3:29-30, “He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost” hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit”—thus opposition is made between His immaculate nature and that of the unclean or unholy spirit. Observe too, how this verse also furnishes clear proof of His personality, for the “unclean spirit” is a person, and if the Spirit were not a person, no comparative opposition could be made between them. So also we see here His absolute deity, for only *God* could be “blasphemed”! Second, this title views His *operations* and that in respect of *all* His works, for every work of God is holy—in hardening and blinding, equally as in regenerating and sanctifying.

Third, He is called God’s “good spirit” (Neh 9:20), “Thy spirit is good” (Psa 143:10). He is so designated principally from His nature, which is essentially good for “There is none good but one, that is, God” (Mat 19:17). So also from His operations, for “the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph 5:9). Fourth, He is called the “free Spirit” (Psa 51:12), so designated because He is a most generous giver, bestowing His favors severally as He pleases, liberally and upbraiding not. Also because it is His special work to deliver God’s elect from the bondage of sin and Satan and bring them into the glorious liberty of God’s children. Fifth, He is called “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9) because sent by Him (Act 2:33), and as furthering His cause on earth (Joh 16:14). Sixth, He is called “the Spirit of the Lord” (Act 8:39) because He possesses divine authority and requires unhesitating submission from us.

Seventh, He is called, “the *eternal* Spirit” (Heb 9:14). “Among the names and titles by which the Holy Spirit is known in Scripture, that of “the eternal Spirit” is His *peculiar* appellation—a name, which in the very first face of things, accurately defines His nature, and carries with it the



most convincing proof of Godhead. None but ‘the High and Holy One, which inhabiteth eternity,’ can be called *eternal*. Of other beings, who possess a derivative immortality, it may be said, that as they are created for eternity, they may enjoy, through the benignity of their Creator, a future eternal duration. But this differs as widely as the east is from the west, when applied to Him of whom we are speaking. He alone, who possesses an underived, independent, and necessary self-existence, ‘who was, and is, and is to come,’ can be said, in exclusion of all other beings, to be eternal” (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).

Eighth, He is called “the Paraclete” or “the Comforter” (Joh 14:16), than which no better translation can be given, providing the English meaning of the word be kept in mind. Comforter means more than Consoler. It is derived from two Latin words, *com*—“alongside of” and *fortis*—“strength.” Thus a “comforter” is one who stands alongside of one in need, to strengthen. When Christ said He would ask the Father to give His people “another Comforter,” He signified that the Spirit would fill His own place, doing for the disciples what He had done for them while He was with them on earth. The Spirit strengthens in a variety of ways—consoling when cast down, giving grace when weak or timid, guiding when perplexed.

We close this article with a few words from the pen of the late J.C. Philpot (1802-1869), “Nor let anyone think that this doctrine of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit is a mere strife of words, an unimportant matter, or an unprofitable discussion, which we may take or leave, believe or deny, without any injury to our faith or hope. On the contrary, let this be firmly impressed on your mind, that if you deny or disbelieve the personality of the blessed Spirit, you deny and disbelieve with it the grand foundation truth of the Trinity. If your doctrine be unsound, your experience must be a delusion, and your practice an imposition.”

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 64. The Reward of Faith (11:15-16)

Once more we would remind ourselves of the particular circumstances those saints were in to whom our epistle was first addressed. Only as we do so are we in the best position to discern the meaning of its contents, and best fitted to make a right application of the same unto ourselves. It is not that the Hebrews were Jews according to the flesh and we Gentiles, for they, equally with us, were “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1). No, it is the peculiar position which they occupied, with the pressing temptations that solicited them, which we need to carefully ponder. Divine grace had called them out of Judaism (Joh 10:3), but divine judgment had not yet fallen upon Judaism. The temple was still intact and its services continued, and as long as they did so, an appeal was made to the Hebrews to return thereunto.

Now that historical situation adumbrated a moral one. The Christian has been called out from the world to follow Christ, but the judgment of God has not yet fallen upon the world and burned it up. No, it still stands, and we are yet in it, and as long as this is the case, Satan seeks to get us to return thereunto. It is this which enables us to see the force of those verses which are now

engaging our attention. Keeping in mind what has just been said, the reader should have no difficulty in discerning why the apostle reminds us, first, that the patriarchs lived on earth as strangers and pilgrims and secondly, that they went not back again to the land of their birth. As we saw in our last article, that which was typified by the patriarchs living in separation from the Canaanites and their “dwelling in tents,” was the Christian’s renunciation of this world. That which was foreshadowed by their refusal to return unto Chaldea was the Christian’s *continued* renunciation of the world and his actual winning through to heaven.

In the verses which are now to be before us, clear light is thrown upon an essential element in the Christian life. They present to us an aspect of truth which, in some circles, is largely ignored or denied today. There are those who have pressed the blessed truth of the eternal security of the saints with a zeal that was not always according to knowledge. They have presented it in a way that suggests God preserves His people altogether apart from their use of means. They have stated it in a manner as to virtually deny the Christian’s responsibility. They have implied that, having committed my soul unto the keeping of the Lord, I have no more to do with its safety, than I have with money which I have entrusted to the custody of a bank or the government. The result has been that many who have accepted this false presentation of the truth have felt quite at ease in a course of careless and reckless living.

So one-sided is the teaching we refer to that its advocates will not allow for a moment that there is the slightest danger of a real Christian apostatizing. If a servant of God insists that there is, and yet he also affirms that no real saint of God has perished or ever will, they consider him inconsistent and illogical. They seem unable to recognize the fact that, while it is perfectly true from the side of God’s eternal counsels, the value of Christ’s redemption, the efficacy of the Spirit’s work, that none of the elect can be finally lost, yet it is equally true from the side of the Christian’s frailty, the existence of the flesh still within, his being subject unto the assaults of Satan, and his living in a wicked world, that real (not theoretical or imaginary) danger menaces him from every side. No, they fondly imagine that there is only one side to the subject, the divine side.

But the verses we are now to ponder show the fallacy of this. So far from affirming that there was no possibility of the patriarchs going back again to that country which they had left—which, in type, would mean returning to the world—the apostle boldly affirms (caring not who might charge him with being inconsistent with himself) that if their hearts had been set upon Chaldea, they “might have had opportunity to have returned.” Had they grown weary of dwelling in tents and moving about from place to place in a strange land, and purposed to retrace their steps to Mesopotamia, what was there to hinder them so doing? True, *that* would have been an act of unbelief and disobedience, a despising and relinquishing of the promises, yet, from the human side, the way for them so to act was always open. Let us now weigh the details of our passage.

“And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned” (Heb 11:15). There is a threefold connection between these words and that which immediately precedes. First, at the beginning of verse 13, the apostle had affirmed that all those to whom he was referring (and to whom he was directing the special attention of the Hebrews) had “died in faith.” In all that follows to the end of verse 16, he furnishes proof of his assertion. Second, in verse 15, the apostle continues the inference he had drawn in verse 14 from the last clause of verse 13. The confession made by the patriarchs manifested that their hearts were set upon heaven, which was further evidenced by their refusal to return to Chaldea. Third, he anticipates and removes an objection. Seeing that God had commanded them to take up their residence in another land (Canaan), they were “strangers” there

by necessity. No, says the apostle, they were “strangers and pilgrims” (Heb 11:13) by their own consent, too—their hearts as well as their bodies were separated from Chaldea.

The patriarchs’ remaining in a strange land was quite a voluntary thing on their part. And this brings us unto the very heart of what is a real difficulty for many. They do not see that when God “draws” a person (Joh 6:44), He does no violence to his will, that though exercising His sovereignty, man also retains his freedom. Both are true and hold good of the Christian life at every stage of it. Conversion itself is wholly brought about by the mighty operations of divine grace, nevertheless, it is also a free act on the part of the creature. Those who are effectually called by God out of darkness into His marvelous light, do, at conversion, surrender their whole being to Him, renouncing the flesh, the world, and the devil, and vow to wage (by His grace) a ceaseless warfare against them. The Christian life is the habitual continuance of what took place at conversion, the carrying out of the vow then made, the putting of it into practice.

Immediately before conversion a fierce conflict takes place in the soul. On the one side is the devil, seeking to retain his captive by presenting to it the pleasures of sin and the allurements of the world, telling the soul that there will be no more happiness if these be relinquished and the rigid requirements of Christ’s commandments be heeded. On the other side is the Holy Spirit, declaring that the wages of sin is death, that the world is doomed to destruction, and that unless we renounce sin and forsake the world, we must eternally perish. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit presses upon us that nothing short of a wholehearted surrender to the Lordship of Christ can bring us into “*the way of salvation*.” Torn between these conflicting impressions upon his mind, the soul is bidden to sit down and “count the cost” (Luk 14:28), to deliberately weigh the offers of Satan and the terms of Christian discipleship, and to definitely make his choice between them.

It is not that man has the power within himself to refuse the evil and choose the good. It is not that God has left it for the creature to determine his own destiny. It is not that the temptations of Satan are equally powerful with the convictions of the Holy Spirit and that *our* decision turns the scale between them. No indeed, not so do the Scriptures teach and not so does this writer believe. Sin has robbed fallen man of all *power* to do good, yet not his *obligation* to perform it. The destiny of all creatures has been unalterably fixed by the eternal decrees of God, yet not in such a way as to reduce them to irresponsible automations. The operations of the Holy Spirit in God’s elect are invincible, yet they do no violence to the human will. But while salvation, from beginning to end, is to be wholly ascribed to the free and sovereign grace of God, nevertheless, it remains that conversion itself is the voluntary act of man, his own conscious, and free surrendering of himself to God in Christ.

Now the same diverse factors enter into the Christian life itself. Necessarily so, for, as said above, the Christian life is but a progressive continuance of how we begin. Repentance is not once and for all, but as often as we are conscious of having displeased God. Believing in Christ is not a single act which needs no repeating, but a constant requirement, as the “believeth” of John 3:16, and the “coming” of 1 Peter 2:4 plainly shows. So too our renunciation of the world is to be a daily process. The same objects which enthralled us before conversion are still on hand, and unless we are much upon our guard, unless our hearts are warmed and charmed by the loveliness of Christ through maintaining a close fellowship with Him, they will soon gain power over us. Satan is ever ready to tempt, and unless we diligently seek grace to resist him, will trip us up.

“And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned,” (Heb 11:15) but as the next verse shows, they did not do so. In this they were in striking and blessed contrast from Esau, who sold his birthright, valuing temporal things more highly than spiritual. In contrast from the children of Israel who said one to

another, “Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt” (Num 14:4). In contrast from the Gadarenes, who preferred their hogs to Christ and His salvation (Mar 5). In contrast from the stony-ground hearers who “have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luk 8:13). In contrast from the apostates of 2 Peter 2:20-22, the latter end of whom is “worse with them than the beginning.” Solemn warnings are these which each professing Christian needs to take to heart.

Note how positively the apostle expressed it, “And truly” or “verily.” “If they had been mindful,” which means, had their minds frequently dwelt upon Chaldea, had their hearts desired it. How this shows the great importance of girding up the loins of our minds (1Pe 1:13), of disciplining our thoughts, for as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro 23:7). “It is in the nature of faith to mortify, not only corrupt and sinful lusts, but our natural affections, and their most vehement inclinations, though in themselves innocent, if they are any way uncompliant with duties of obedience to the commands of God—yea herein lies the principal trial of the sincerity and power of faith. Our lives, parents, wives, children, houses, possessions, our country, are the principal, proper, lawful objects of our natural affections. But when they or any of them, stand in the way of God’s commands, if they are hindrances to the doing or suffering any thing according to His will, faith doth not only mortify, weaken, and take off that love, but gives us a comparative hatred of them” (John Owen, 1616-1683 ).

“They might have had opportunity to have returned.” (Heb 11:15) They knew the way, were well furnished with funds, had plenty of time at their disposal, and health and strength for the journey. The Canaanites would not have grieved at their departure (Gen 26:18-21), and undoubtedly their old friends would have heartily welcomed them back again. In like manner (as we have said before), the way back was wide open for the Hebrews to return unto Judaism. It was their special snare and a constant and habitual renunciation of it was required of them. So too if *we* choose to return unto the world and engage again in all its vain pursuits, there are “opportunities” enough, enticements abound on every hand, and worldly friends would heartily welcome us to their society if we would but lower our colors, drop our godliness, and follow their course.

But the patriarchs did not go back again to that country from whence they came out, instead, they persevered in the path of duty and despite all discouragements followed that course which the divine commandments marked out for them. In this they have left us an example. They hankered not after the wealth, honours, pleasures, or society of Chaldea. Their hearts were engaged with something vastly superior. They knew that in heaven they had “a better and enduring substance,” and therefore they disdained the baubles which once had satisfied them. Divine grace had taught them that those sources of joy, which they had once so eagerly sought, were “cisterns that can hold no water” (Jer 2:13), but that in Christ they had an ever-flowing well that springeth up unto everlasting life. Grace had taught them that it is sinful to make material things the chief objects of this life. They sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

So little did Abraham esteem Chaldea that he would not go thither in person to obtain a wife for his son, nor suffer Isaac to go, but sent his servant and made him swear that he would not bring her thither, if she were unwilling to come—another illustration that nothing is more voluntary than godliness. So it is with the Christian when he is first converted. The world has lost all its attractions for him, nor can it regain its hold upon his heart so long as he walks with God. The acutest test comes in seasons of prosperity. “David professeth himself to be a stranger and a pilgrim, not only when he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, but when he was in his palace, and in his best estate. We are not to renounce our comforts and throw away God’s

blessings, but we are to renounce our carnal affections. We cannot get out of the world when we please, but we must get the world out of us. It is a great trial of grace to refuse the opportunity. It is the most difficult lesson to learn how to abound, more difficult than to learn how to want and to be abased, to have comforts and yet to have the heart weaned from comforts, not to be necessarily mortified, but to be voluntarily mortified” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

It is not the absence of temptations, but the resisting of and prevailing over them which evidences the efficacy of indwelling grace. The power of voluntary godliness is manifested in the conflict, when we have the “opportunity” to go wrong, but decline it. Joseph had not only a temptation, but the “occasion” for yielding to it, yet grace forbade (Gen 39:9). It was the command of God which held back the patriarchs from returning to Chaldea and the same controls the hearts of all the regenerate. “It is easy to be good when we cannot be otherwise or when all temptations to the contrary are out of the way. All the seeming goodness there is in so many, they owe it to the want of a temptation and to the want of an opportunity of doing otherwise” (Thomas Manton). Not so with the real Christian.

“But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:16). The first half of this verse gives the positive side of what has been before us and amplified what was said in verse 14. It is not enough to renounce the world, but we must also have our hearts carried forth unto better things. We must believe in and seek heaven itself. There are some who disdain worldly profits, but instead of seeking the true riches, are immersed in worldly pleasures. Others while despising fleshly recreations and dissipations, devote themselves to more serious occupations, yet “labour for that which satisfieth not” (Isa 55:2). But the Christian, while passing through it, makes a sanctified use of the world and has his affections set upon things above.

“But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly” (Heb 11:16). It helps us to link together the four statements made concerning this. First, Abraham *looked for* a country which denotes faith’s expectations of blessedness to come. It was not a mere passing glance of the mind, but a serious and constant anticipation of celestial bliss. Second, “They *seek* a country” (v. 14). They make it the great aim and business of their lives to avoid every hindrance, overcome every obstacle, and steadfastly press forward along the narrow way that leads thither, “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1Ti 6:19). Third, “They *desire* a better country” (v. 16). They long to be relieved from the body of this death, removed from this scene of sin, and be taken to be forever with the Lord, “We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). He that has had a taste of heaven in the joy of the Spirit, his heart cries, “When shall I come to the full enjoyment of my inheritance!” Fourth, they “*declare plainly* that they seek a country” (v. 14). Their daily walk makes it manifest that they belong not to this world, but are citizens of heaven.

One of the best evidences that we are truly seeking heaven is the possession of hearts that are weaned from this world. None will ever enter the Father’s house on high in whose soul the first fruits of heavenly peace and joy does not grow now. He who finds his satisfaction in temporal things is woefully deceived if he imagines he can enjoy eternal things. He whose joy is all gone when earthly possessions are snatched from him, knows nothing of that peace which “passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7) And yet, if the auto, radio, newspaper, money to go to the movies, were taken away from the average “church member,” what would he then have left to make life worth living? O how few can really say, “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 God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16). “The word ‘therefore’ denotes not the procuring or meritorious cause of the thing itself, but the consequent or what ensued thereon” (John Owen). God will be no man’s debtor, “Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30 and cf. 2Ti 2:21) is His sure promise. By confessing they were strangers and pilgrims, the patriarchs had avowed their supreme desire for and hope of a portion superior to any that could be found on earth. Hence, because they were willing to renounce all worldly prospects so as to follow God in an obedient faith, for the sake of an invisible but eternal inheritance, He did not disdain to be known as their Friend and Portion. “We are hence to conclude that there is no place for us among God’s children except we renounce the world and that there will be for us no inheritance in heaven except we become pilgrims on earth” (John Calvin, 1509-1564 ).

“God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16). Here was the grand reward of their faith. So well did God approve of their desire and design, He was pleased to give evidence of His special regard unto them. “Not ashamed” literally signifies that He had no cause to “blush” because He had been disgraced by them—it is God speaking after the manner of men. It is the negative way of saying that He made a joyous acknowledgment of them, as a father does of dutiful children. When we think not only of the personal unworthiness of the patriarchs (fallen, sinful creatures), but also of their contemptible situation—“dwelling in tents” (Heb 11:9) in a strange land—we may well marvel at the infinite condescension of the Maker of the universe identifying Himself with them. What incredible grace for the divine Majesty to avow Himself the God of worms of the earth!

Ah, those who renounce the world for God’s sake shall not be the losers. But observe it was not simply, “God is not ashamed *to be* their God,” but “to be *called* their God” (Heb 11:16). He took this very title in a peculiar manner. Unto Moses He said, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exo 3:6). Thus, to be “called their God” means that He was their covenant God and Father. Not only is He the God of His children by creation and providence, but He is also unto them “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10), as He is the God of Christ and all the elect in Him. This He manifests by quickening, enlightening, guiding, protecting, and making all things work together for their good. He continues to be such a God unto them through life and in death, so that they may depend upon His love, be assured of His faithfulness, count upon His power, and be safely carried through every trial, till they are landed on the shores of eternal bliss.

“God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16). The wider reference is to all the elect, who have a special interest in Him. These are known, first, by the manner of their coming into this relation. God brings His people into this special relation by effectually calling them and then when He has taken possession of their hearts, they choose Him for their all-sufficient portion, and completely give up themselves to Him. Their language is, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). Their surrender to Him is evidenced by, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do”? (Act 9:6). Second, by their manner of living in this relation. They glorify God by their subjection to Him, love for Him, trust in Him. Unto those who have renounced all idols, God is not ashamed to be known as their God.

Now if God be our “God” how *contented* we should be! “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage” (Psa 16:5-6). This should ever be our language. How *confident* we should be! “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa 23:1). This should

ever be our boast. How *joyful* we should be! “Because Thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Psa 63:3). This should ever be our confession. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” (Psa 16:11). When brought home to glory we shall better understand what this connotes—“*their* God.”

How may I know that God is *my* “God”? Did you ever enter into covenant with Him? “Was your spirit ever subdued to yield to Him? Do you remember when you were bond-slaves of Satan, that God broke in upon you with a mighty and powerful work of grace, subduing your heart, and causing you to yield, to give the hand to Him, to come and lie at His feet, and lay down the weapons of defiance? Didst thou ever come as a guilty creature, willing to take laws from God? Though it be God’s condescension to capitulate with us, yet we do not capitulate with Him as equals, but as a subdued creature, who is taken captive and ready to be destroyed every moment, and is therefore willing to yield and cry quarter. How do you behave yourselves in the covenant? Do you love God as the chiefest good? Do you see His glory as the utmost end? Do you obey Him as the highest Lord? Do you depend on Him as your only Paymaster? This is to give God the glory of a God” (Thomas Manton).

“For he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:16). Here is the crowning evidence that He *is* their “God.” The “city” is heaven itself. It is spoken of as “prepared” because God did, in His eternal counsels, appoint it, see Matthew 20:23, 1 Corinthians 2:9. But sin entered? True, and Christ has put away the sins of His people, and has entered heaven as their Representative and Forerunner. Therefore has He gone there to “prepare” a place for us (Joh 14:3), having laid the foundation for this in His own merits, and hence we read of “the purchased possession” (Eph 1:14). He is now in heaven possessing it in our name. O what cause have we to bow in wonderment and worship.

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### 16. His Victory over Saul

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Pro 16:32). A man who is “slow to anger” is esteemed by the Lord, respected by men, is happy in himself, and is to be preferred above the strongest giant that is not master of self. Alexander the Great conquered the world, yet in his uncontrollable wrath, slew his best friends. Being “slow to anger” is to take time and consider before we suffer our passions to break forth, that they may not transgress due bounds, and he who can thus control himself is to be esteemed above the mightiest warrior. A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than triumph by brute force.

The most desirable authority is self-government. The conquest of ourselves and our own unruly passions, requires more regular and persevering management than does the obtaining of a victory over the physical forces of an enemy. The conquering of our own spirit is a more

important achievement than the taking of a foe's fortress. He that can command his temper is superior to him that can successfully storm a fortified town. Natural courage, skill and patience, may do the one, but it requires the grace of God and the assistance of the Holy Spirit to do the other. Blessedly was all this exemplified by David in that incident which has occupied our attention in the last two articles. He had been sorely provoked by Saul, yet when the life of his enemy was in his hand, he graciously spared him and returned good for evil.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Pro 15:1). Strikingly was this illustrated in what is now to be before us. A child of God is not to rest satisfied because *he* has not originated strife, but if others begin it, he must not continue it, but endeavor to end it by mollifying the matter. Better far to pour oil on the troubled waters, than to add fuel to the fire. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (Jam 3:17). We are to disarm resentment by every reasonable concession. Mild words and gentle expressions, delivered with kindness and humility, will weaken bitterness and scatter the storm of wrath. Note how the Ephraimites were pacified by Gideon's mild answer (Jdg 8:1-13). The noblest courage is shown when we withstand our own corruptions and overcome enemies by kindness.

"Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luk 11:4). Wherein does this forgiving of others consist? First, in withholding ourselves from revenge. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any" (Col 3:13): Forbearing and forgiving are inseparably connected. Some men will say, "We will do to him as he has done to us," but God bids us, "*Say not*, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work" (Pro 24:29). Corrupt nature thirsts for retaliation and has a strong inclination that way, but grace should check it. Men think it a base thing to put up with wrongs and injuries, but this it is which gives a man a victory over himself and the truest victory over his enemy, when he forbears to revenge.

By nature there is a spirit in us which is turbulent, revengeful, and desirous of returning evil for evil, but when we are able to deny it, we are ruling our own spirit. Failure so to do, being overcome by passion, is moral weakness, for our enemy has thoroughly overcome us when his injuring of us prevails to our breaking of God's laws in order to retaliate. Therefore we are bidden, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). Then is grace victorious and then do we manifest a noble, brave, and strong spirit. And wondrously will God bless our exemplifications of His grace, for it is often His way to shame the party that did the wrong, by overcoming him with the meekness and generosity of the one he has injured. It was thus in the case of David and Saul, as we shall now see.

"And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept" (1Sa 24:16). Though his mind was so hostile to David, and he had cruelly chased him up and down, yet he now saw that the one he was pursuing had forborne revenge when it was in his power, he was moved to tears. In like manner, when the captains of the Syrians, whom the prophet had temporarily blinded, were led to Samaria, fully expecting to be slain there, we are told that the king "prepared great provisions for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away." And what was the sequel to such kindness unto their enemies? This—it so wrought upon their hearts, their bands "came no more into the land of Israel" (2Ki 6:20-23). May these incidents speak loudly into each of our hearts.

"And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept" (1Sa 24:16).



Let us pause and adore before the restraining power of God. Filled with wrath and fury, so eager to take David's life, Saul, instead of attempting to kill him, had stood still and heard David's speech without an interruption. He who commands the winds and the waves, can, when He pleases, still the most violent storm within a human breast. But more—Saul was not only awed and subdued, but melted by David's kindness. Observe the noticeable change in his language. Before, it was only "the son of Jesse," (1Sa 22:13) now he says, "my son, David." So deeply was the king affected, that he was moved to tears, yet like those of Esau, they were not tears of real repentance.

"And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil" (1Sa 24:17). Saul was constrained to acknowledge David's integrity and his own iniquity, just as Pharaoh said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you" (Exo 10:16), and as many today will own their wrongdoing when shamed by Christians returning to them good for evil or when impressed by some startling providence of God. But such admissions are of little value if there is no change for the better in the lives of those who make them. Nevertheless, this acknowledgment of Saul's made good that word of God's upon which He had caused His servant to hope, "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Psa 37:6). They who are careful to maintain "a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward man" (Act 24:16), may safely leave it unto Him to secure the credit of it.

"This fair confession was sufficient to prove David innocent, even his enemy himself being judge, but not enough to prove Saul himself a true penitent. He should have said, 'Thou art righteous, and I am wicked,' but the utmost he will own is this, 'Thou art more righteous than I.' Bad men will commonly go no farther than this in their confessions. They will own they are not so good as some others are. There are those that are better than they, more righteous" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Ah, it takes the supernatural workings of divine grace in the heart to strip us of all our fancied goodness and bring us into the dust as self-condemned sinners. It requires too the continual renewings of the Holy Spirit *to keep us in the dust*, so that we truthfully exclaim, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake" (Psa 115:1).

"And thou hast shown this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not" (1Sa 24:18). This is striking. Even the most desperate sinners are sometimes amenable to acts of kindness. Saul could not but own that David had dealt far more merciful with him, than he would have done with David if their position had been reversed. He acknowledged that he had been labouring under a misapprehension concerning his son, for clear proof had been given that David was of a far different stamp than what he had supposed. "We are too apt to suspect others to be worse affected towards us than they really are, and then perhaps they are proved to be and when afterwards our mistake is discovered, we should be forward to recall our suspicions as Saul doth here" (Matthew Henry).

"And thou has showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not" (1Sa 24:18). In view of the later sequel, this is also exceedingly solemn. Saul not only recognizes the magnanimity of David, but he perceives too the providence of God. He owns that it was none other than the hand of Jehovah which had placed him at the mercy of the man whose life he had been seeking. Thus it was plain that God was *for* David and who could hope to succeed *against* him! How this ought to have deterred him from seeking his hurt afterwards, yet it did not. His "goodness is as a morning cloud,

and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hos 6:4). Alas, there are many who mourn for their sins, but do not truly repent of them, weep bitterly for their transgressions, and yet continue in love and league with them, discern and own the providences of God, yet do not yield themselves to Him.

“For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?” (v. 19). No, this is not the customary way among men. “Revenge is sweet” to poor fallen human nature and few indeed refuse to drink from this tempting cup when it is presented to them. And if there be more lenity shown unto fallen enemies today than there was in past ages, it is not to be ascribed unto any improvement in man, but to the beneficent effects of the spread of Christianity. That this is the case may be clearly seen in the vivid contrasts presented among nations where the Gospel is preached and where it is unknown. The “dark places” of the earth are still “full of the habitations of cruelty” (Psa 74:20).

“For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day” (v. 19). Strange language this for a would-be murderer! Yes, even the reprobate have spurts and flashes of seeming piety at times and many superficial people (who “believeth every word,” Pro 14:15) are deceived thereby. “Seemingly pious” we say, for after all, those fair words of Saul were empty ones. Had he really meant what he said, would he not personally and promptly have rewarded David himself? Of course he would. He was king, he had power to, it was his bounden duty to reinstate David in the bosom of his family, and bestow upon him marks of the highest honour and esteem. But he did nothing of the sort. Ah, dear reader, do not measure people by what they say. It is *actions* which speak louder than words.

“And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand” (v. 20). The realization that God had appointed David to succeed him on the throne was now forced upon Saul. The providence of God in so remarkably preserving and prospering him, his princely spirit and behavior, his calling to mind of what Samuel had declared, namely, that the kingdom should be given to a neighbour of his, better than he (1Sa 15:28)—and such David was by his own confession (v. 17), and the portion cut off his own robe—which must have been a vivid reminder of Samuel rendering his mantle, when he made the solemn prediction. All combined to convince the unhappy king of this. Thus did God encourage the heart of His oppressed servant and support his faith and hope. Sometimes He deigns to employ strange instruments in giving us a message of cheer.

“Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father’s house” (v. 21). Under the conviction that God was going to place David upon the throne of Israel, Saul desired from him the guaranty of an oath, that he would not, when king, extirpate his posterity. What a tribute this was unto *the reality* of David’s profession! Ah, the integrity, honesty, veracity of a genuine child of God is recognized by those with whom he comes into contact. They who have dealings with him know that *his* word is his bond. Treacherous and unscrupulous as Saul was, if David promised in the name of the Lord to spare his children, he was assured that it would be fulfilled to the letter. Reader, is *your* character thus known and respected by those among whom you move?

“Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father’s house” (1Sa 24:21). How tragically this reveals the state of his heart. Poor Saul was more concerned about the credit and interests of his family in this world, than he was of securing the forgiveness of his sins before he entered the world to come. Alas, there are many who have their seasons of remorse, are affected by their dangerous situations, and almost persuaded to renounce their sins. They are convinced of the

excellency of true saints, as acting from superior principles to those which regulate their own conduct, and cannot withhold from them a good word. Yet are they not thereby humbled or changed and sin and the world continue to reign in their hearts until death overtakes them.

“And David swore unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up into the hold” (1Sa 24:22). David was willing to bind himself to the promise which Saul asked of him and accordingly swore to it on oath. Thus he has left us an example to “be subject unto the higher powers” (Rom 13:1). His later history evidences how he respected his oath to Saul, by sparing Mephibosheth, and in punishing the murderers of Ishbosheth. It is to be noted that David did not ask Saul to swear unto him, that he would no more seek his life, knowing him too well to trust in a transient appearance of friendliness and having no confidence in his word. Nor should we deliberately place a temptation in the way of those lacking in honour, by seeking to extract from them a definite promise.

“And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold” (v. 22). David did not trust Saul, whose inconstancy, perfidy, and cruel hatred, he full well knew. He did not think it safe to return unto his own house, nor to dwell in the open country, but remained in the wilderness, among the rocks and the caves. The grace of God will teach us to forgive and be kind unto our enemies, but not to trust those who have repeatedly deceived us, for malice often seems dead, when it is only dormant, and will ere long revive with double force. “They that, like David, are innocent as doves, must thus, like David, be wise as serpents” (Matthew Henry). Note how verse 22 pathetically foreshadowed John 7:53 and 8:1.

Here then is the blessed victory that David gained over Saul, not by treacherous stealth or by brute force, but a moral triumph. How complete his victory was that day is seen in the extent to which that haughty monarch humbled himself before David, entreating him to be kind unto his offspring, when he should be king. But the great truth for us to lay hold of, the central lesson here recorded for our learning, is that David first gained the victory over himself before he triumphed over Saul. May writer and reader be more diligent and earnest in seeking grace from God that we may not be overcome by evil, but that we may “overcome evil with good.”

## COMING TO CHRIST

### Part 4

#### *IV. With the Will*

The man within the body is possessed of three principal faculties—the understanding, the affections, and the will. As was shown in the first article, all of these were radically affected by the Fall. They were defiled and corrupted, and in consequence, they are used in the service of self and sin, rather than of God and of Christ. But in regeneration, these faculties are quickened and cleansed by the Spirit, not completely, but initially, and continuously so in the life-long process of

sanctification and perfectly so at our glorification. Now each of these three faculties is subordinated to the others by the order of nature, that is, as man has been constituted by his Maker. One faculty is influenced by the other. In Genesis 3:6 we read, “The woman saw [perceived] that the tree was good for food”—that was a conclusion drawn by the understanding, “and that it was *pleasant* to the eyes”—there was the response of her affections, “and a tree to be desired”—there was the moving of the will, “she took”—there was the completed action.

Now the motions of divine grace work through the apprehensions of faith in the understanding, these warming and firing the affections, and they in turn influencing and moving the will. Every faculty of the soul is put forth in a saving “coming to Christ.” “If thou believest with *all* thine heart, thou mayest”—be baptized (Act 8:37). “Coming to Christ” is more immediately an act of the will, as John 5:40 shows, yet the will is not active toward Him until the understanding has been enlightened and the affections quickened. The Spirit first causes the sinner to perceive his deep need of Christ and this, by showing him his fearful rebellion against God and that none but Christ can atone for the same. Secondly, the Spirit creates in the heart a desire after Christ and this, by making him sick of sin and in love with holiness. Third, as the awakened and enlightened soul has been given to see the glory and excellency of Christ and His perfect suitability to the lost and perishing sinner, then the Spirit draws out the will to set the highest value on that excellency, to esteem it far above all else, and to close with Him.

As there is a divine order among the three persons of the Godhead in providing salvation, so there is in the applying or bestowing of it. It was God the Father’s good pleasure appointing His people from eternity unto salvation, which was the most full and sufficient *impulsive* cause of their salvation, and every whit able to produce its effect. It was the incarnate Son of God whose obedience and sufferings were the most complete and sufficient *meritorious* cause of their salvation, to which nothing can be added to make it more apt and able to secure the travail of His soul. Yet neither the one nor the other can *actually* save any sinner except as the Spirit *applies* Christ to it. His work being the *efficient* and immediate cause of their salvation. In like manner, the sinner is not saved when his understanding is enlightened and his affections fired. There must also be the act of the will, surrendering to God, and laying hold of Christ.

The order of the Spirit’s operations corresponds to the three great offices of Christ, the Mediator, namely, His prophetic, priestly, and kingly. As Prophet, He is first apprehended by the understanding, the truth of God being received from His lips. As Priest, He is trusted and loved by the heart or affections, His glorious person being first endeared unto the soul by the gracious work which He performed for it. As Potentate, our will must be subdued unto Him, so that we submit to His government, yield to His scepter, and heed His commandments. Nothing short of the throne of our hearts will satisfy the Lord Jesus. In order to this, the Holy Spirit casts down our carnal imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2Co 10:5), so that we freely and gladly take His yoke upon us, which yoke is, as one of the Puritans said, “lined with love.”

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). This “drawing” is accomplished by the Spirit—first, in effectually enlightening the understanding; secondly, by quickening the affections; third, by freeing the will from the bondage of sin and inclining it toward God. By the invincible workings of grace, the Spirit turns the bent of that will, which before moved only toward sin and vanity, unto Christ. “Thy people,” said God unto the Mediator, “shall be willing in the day of thy power” (Psa 110:3). Yet though divine power be put forth upon a human object, the Spirit does not infringe the will’s prerogative of acting freely. He

morally persuades it. He subdues its sinful intractability. He overcomes its prejudice, wins and draws it by the sweet attractions of grace.

“God never treats man as though he were a brute. He does not drag him with cart ropes. He treats men as men and when He binds them with cords, they are the cords of love and the bands of a man. I may exercise power over another’s will and yet that other man’s will may be perfectly free, because the constraint is exercised in a manner according with the laws of the human mind. If I show a man that a certain line of action is much for his advantage, he feels bound to follow it, but he is perfectly free in so doing. If man’s will were subdued or chained by some physical process, if man’s heart should, for instance, be taken from him and be turned round by a manual operation, that would be altogether inconsistent with human freedom or indeed with human nature, and yet I think some few people imagine that we mean this when we talk of constraining influence and divine grace. We mean nothing of the kind. We mean that Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas it was once rebellious it becomes obedient. Whereas it stood stoutly against the Most High, it throws down the weapons of its rebellion and cries, ‘I yield! I yield! subdued by sovereign love and by the enlightenment which Thou hast bestowed upon me, I yield myself to Thy will’” (C. H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892, on John 6:37).

The perfect consistency between the freedom of a regenerated man’s spiritual actions and the efficacious grace of God moving him thereto is seen in 2 Corinthians 8:16-17. “But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being moved forward, of his own accord he went unto you.” Titus was moved to that work by Paul’s exhortation and was “willing of his own accord” to engage therein, and yet it was “God which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus” for them. God controls the inward feelings and acts of men without interfering either with their liberty or responsibility. The zeal of Titus was the spontaneous effusion of his own heart and was an index to and element of his character, nevertheless, God wrought in him both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure.

No sinner savingly “comes to Christ,” or truly receives Him into the heart, until the will freely consents (not merely “assents” in a theoretical way) to the severe and self-denying terms upon which He is presented in the Gospel. No sinner is prepared to forsake all for Christ, take up “the cross,” and “follow” Him in the path of universal obedience until the heart genuinely esteems Him “The fairest among ten thousand,” and this none ever do before the understanding has been supernaturally enlightened and the affections supernaturally quickened. Obviously, none will espouse themselves with conjugal affections to that person whom they account not the best that can be chosen. It is as the Spirit convicts us of our emptiness and shows us Christ’s fullness, our guilt and His righteousness, our filthiness and the cleansing merits of His blood, our depravity and His holiness, that the heart is won and the resistance of the will is overcome.

The holy and spiritual truth of God finds nothing akin to itself in the unregenerate soul, but instead, everything that is opposed to it (Joh 15:18, Rom 8:7). The demands of Christ are too humbling to our natural pride, too searching for the callous conscience, too exacting for our fleshly desires. And a miracle of grace has to be wrought within us before this awful depravity of our nature, this dreadful state of affairs, is changed. That miracle of grace consists in overcoming the resistance which is made by indwelling sin and creating desires and longings Christward, and then it is that the will cries,

*“Nay but I yield, I yield,  
I can hold out no more;  
I sink, by dying love compell’d,  
And own Thee Conqueror.”*

A beautiful illustration of this is found in Ruth 1:14-18. Naomi, a backslidden saint, is on the point of leaving the far country and (typically) returning to her Father’s house. Her two daughters-in-law wish to accompany her. Faithfully did Naomi bid them “count the cost” (Luk 14:28), instead of at once urging them to act on their first impulse, she pointed out the difficulties and trials to be encountered. This was too much for Orpah. Her “goodness” (like that of the stony-ground hearers and myriads of others) was only “as a morning cloud,” and “as the early dew” it quickly went away (Hos 6:4). In blessed contrast from this we read, “But Ruth clave unto her...And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

What depth and loveliness of affection was here! What whole-hearted self-surrender! See Ruth freely and readily leaving her own country and kindred, tearing herself from every association of nature, turning a deaf ear to her mother-in-law’s begging her to return to her gods (Ru 1:15) and people. See her renouncing idolatry and all that flesh holds dear, to be a worshipper and servant of the living God, counting all things but loss for the sake of His favor and salvation, and her future conduct proved her faith was genuine and her profession sincere. Ah, naught but a miraculous work of God in her soul can explain this. It was God working in her “both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). He was drawing her with the bands of love—grace triumphed over the flesh. This is what every genuine conversion is—a complete surrender of the mind, heart, and will to God and His Christ, so that there is a desire to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Rev 14:4).

The relation between our understanding being enlightened and the affections quickened by God and the resultant consent of the will, is seen in Psalm 119:34, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.” “The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is the devout reverence for the law and a reverent keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of His love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith. The understanding operates upon the affections. It convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers, and then it reveals the majesty of the law-Giver and the whole nature bows before His supreme will. He alone obeys God who can say ‘my Lord, I would serve Thee, and do it with all my heart,’ and none can truly say this till they have received as a free grant the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit” (C.H. Spurgeon).

Ere turning to our final section, a few words need to be added here upon 1 Peter 2:4-5, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone...ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.” Has the sovereign grace of God inclined me to come unto Christ? then it is my duty and interest to “abide” in Him (Joh 15:4). Abide in Him by a life of faith and letting His Spirit abide in me without grieving Him (Eph 4:30) or quenching His motions (1Th 5:19). It is not enough that I once believed on Christ, I must live in and upon Him by faith daily, Galatians 2:20. It is in this way of continual coming to Christ that we are “built up a spiritual house.” It is in this way the life of grace is maintained, until it issue in the life of glory. Faith is to be always receiving out of His

fullness “grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). Daily should there be the renewed dedication of myself unto Him and the heart’s occupation with Him.

#### V. Tests.

Unto those who never savingly “come to Christ,” He will yet say, “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41). The contemplation of those awful words ought to almost freeze the very blood in our veins, searching our consciences and aweing our hearts. But alas, it is much to be feared that Satan will blunt their piercing force unto many of our readers, by assuring them that *they have already* come to Christ and telling them they are fools to doubt it for a moment. But O dear friend, seeing that there is no less than your immortal soul at stake, that whether you spend eternity in heaven with the blessed or in hell with the cursed, hinges on whether or not you really and truly “come to Christ,” will you not read the paragraphs which follow with double care.

1. How many rest on their sound doctrinal views of Christ. They believe firmly in His deity, His holy humanity, His perfect life, His vicarious death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to God’s right hand, His present intercession on high, and His second advent. So too did many of those to whom James addressed his epistle, but he reminded them that the “devils also believe, and tremble” (Jam 2:19). O my reader, saving faith in Christ is very much more than assenting to the teachings of Scripture concerning Him. It is the giving up of the soul unto Him to be saved, to renounce all else, to yield fully unto Him.

2. How many mistake the absence of doubts for a proof they have savingly come to Christ. They take for granted that for which they have no clear evidence. But reader, a man possesses not Christ by faith as he does money in a strong-box or title-deeds of land which are preserved by his lawyer and which he never looks at once in a year. No, Christ is as “bread” which a man feeds upon, chews, digests, which his stomach works upon continually, and by which he is nourished and strengthened, John 6:53. The empty professor feeds upon a good opinion of himself, rather than upon Christ.

3. How many mistake the stirring of the emotions for the Spirit’s quickening of the affections. If people weep under the preaching of the Word, superficial observers are greatly encouraged, and if they go forward to the “mourners’ bench” and sob and wail over their sins, this is regarded as a sure sign that God has savingly convicted them. But a supernatural work of divine grace goes much deeper than that. Tears are but on the surface and are a matter of temperamental constitution—even in nature, some of those who feel things the most give the least outward sign of it. It is the weeping of the heart which God requires. It is a godly sorrow for sin which breaks its reigning power over the soul that evidences regeneration.

4. How many mistake a fear of the wrath to come for a hatred of sin. No one wants to go to hell. If the intellect be convinced of its reality and the unspeakable awfulness of its torments are in a measure believed, then there may be great uneasiness of mind, fear of conscience, and anguish of heart, over the prospect of suffering its eternal burnings. Those fears may last a considerable time, yea, their effects may never completely wear off. The subject of them may come under the ministry of a faithful servant of God, hear him describe the deep plowing of the Spirit’s work, and conclude that he has been the subject of them, yet have none of that love for Christ which manifests itself in a life, all the details of which seek to honour and glorify Him.

5. How many mistake a false peace for a true one. Let a person who has had awakened within him a natural dread of the lake of fire, whose own conscience has made him wretched, and the preaching he has heard terrify him yet more, then is he not (like a drowning man) ready to clutch at a straw. Let one of the false prophets of the day tell him that all he has to do is believe John

3:16 and salvation is his and how eagerly will he—though unchanged in heart—drink in such “smooth things.” Assured that nothing more is required than to firmly believe that God loves him and that Christ died for him, and his burden is gone—peace now fills him. Yes, and nineteen times out of twenty, that “peace” is nothing but Satan’s opiate, drugging his conscience and chloroforming him into hell. “There is no [true, spiritual] peace, saith my God, to the wicked,” (Isa 57:21).and unless the heart has been purified no man will see God (Mat 5:8).

6. How many mistake self-confidence for spiritual assurance. It is natural for each of us to think well and hope well of ourselves and to imagine with Haman, “I am the man whom the King delighteth to honour.” Perhaps the reader is ready to say, “That is certainly not true of me. So far from having a high esteem, I regard myself as a worthless, sinful creature.” Yes, and so deceitful is the human heart and so ready is Satan to turn everything to his own advantage, these very lowly thoughts of self may be feasted on and rested on to assure the heart that all is well with you. The apostate king Saul began by having a lowly estimate of himself (1Sa 9:21).

7. How many make a promise the sole ground of their faith and look no further than the letter of it. Thus the Jews were deceived by the letter of the law, for they never saw the spiritual meaning of Moses’ ministry. In like manner, multitudes are deceived by the letter of such promises as Acts 16:31, Romans 10:13, etc., and look not to Christ in them. They see that He is the jewel in the casket, but rest upon the superscription without and never lay hold of the treasure within. But unless the *person* of Christ be apprehended, unless there be a real surrendering to His Lordship, unless He be Himself received into the heart, then believing the letter of the promises will avail nothing.

The above paragraphs have been written in the hope that God may be pleased to arouse some empty professors out of their false security. But lest any of Christ’s little ones be stumbled, we close with an excerpt from John Bunyan’s *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, “How shall we know that such men are coming to Christ? Answer: do they cry out at sin, being burdened with it, as an exceedingly bitter thing? Do they fly from it, as from the face of a deadly serpent? Do they cry out of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, as to justification in the sight of God? Do they cry out after the Lord Jesus to save them? Do they see more worth and merit in one drop of Christ’s blood to save them, than in all the sins of the world to damn them? Are they tender of sinning against Jesus Christ? Do they favor Christ in this world and do they leave all the world for His sake? And are they willing (God helping them) to run hazards for His name, for the love they bear to Him? Are His saints precious to them? If these things be so, these men *are* coming to Christ.”

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# DISPENSATIONALISM

## 2. The Purpose of God (Continued)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph 1:3-4). As we stated in the first section of this article (March issue), it is a great mistake to approach the study of God’s purpose and plan (His program for this world) by making the creation of Adam our starting point. That is to commence at the middle instead of the beginning. No, rather must we take as the foundation of all God’s dealings with the earth what is affirmed in Ephesians 1:3-4. Nor must the terms of those verses be restricted unto the New Testament saints. Instead, they speak of the entire election of grace, the sum of that people which God gave unto Christ to be redeemed by Him.

Probably it will at once be objected to what has just been said that the Old Testament saints were *not* “Blessed with all *spiritual* blessings in the *heavenlies* in Christ,” but rather that they were blessed with *temporal* blessings *on earth* in Abraham. So it may appear from much of the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures, but if we allow the New Testament to open the mystery contained in them, we are forced to come to an entirely different conclusion. As this is a vital point of interpretation, and one which is now so little understood, we feel obliged to labour it at some length. Of course carnal men can only perceive the external meaning of God’s Word, but inasmuch as some of God’s own children have been “carried away” by their fleshly reasonings, we trust that our efforts may be used of the Lord in dispelling the mists of error from the minds of some of His own people.

The apostle Paul, in the 3rd chapter of Galatians, when treating of the blessings of Abraham (that is, the things God promised to Abraham and in him to all nations, vv. 8, 9) does in the fourteenth verse clearly explain that “blessing” to be a *spiritual* one, affirming “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” The words “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit” are a manifest exegesis of “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.” Now the promise and gift of the Spirit is the substance and sum of all spiritual blessings, for He is the root and fountain of them. To say we have the Spirit given unto us is all one has to declare that we have all spiritual blessings conveyed. This is clear from a comparison of Luke 11:13 with Matthew 7:11. What Christ in the former calls the Father giving “the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him,” in the latter He terms “give good things to them that ask Him,” that is, the things which are truly “good” which the Spirit brings with Him.

As Calvin long ago pointed out in his commentary on that epistle, the above interpretation is established and fixed by two expressions in that verse. First, the apostle did not say, “The Spirit

of promise,” which would have thrown the emphasis upon the person of the Blessor, but “the promise of the Spirit,” which is a Hebraism for spiritual blessings, in opposition to things outward and material. Second, the confirming words “by faith,” that is, those blessings of which *faith* is sensible and appropriate, receiving and taking in *spiritual* things, being a divinely implanted principle suited to the reception of just such things. Thus it is one and the same “blessing” which comes on the Gentiles (who had not the promise of a literal Canaan) and upon God’s elect among the Jews—which is the apostle’s theme and scope in Galatians 3. The things promised to Abraham consisted in things *spiritual* and therefore the Gentiles as well as the Jews were capable of them.

In further proof of this, we would appeal to an incident which has greatly puzzled those of our moderns who have given any serious thought to it. We refer to Jacob being blessed by Isaac, wherein both in God’s intention and Isaac’s apprehension such a vast and great difference was put between Jacob’s portion and Esau’s. Yet if the whole of Genesis 27 be carefully read, no such difference is perceivable, for the whole legacy of blessings bequeathed to Jacob was but outward and earthly in the letter of it, “Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee: cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee” (Gen 27:28-29).

Now compare with this the blessing estated upon Esau, “Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck” (Gen 27:39-40). From the point of earthly blessings, was not that well-nigh as full a portion as that which was promised Jacob? Why, then, should Isaac be so sorrowful (v. 33) that Jacob rather than his favourite son Esau was the recipient of such immeasurably greater blessing, if there was no deeper and grander content in the promises made to him than the outward letter of them denoted? And why should Esau’s hatred be so stirred up against Jacob (v. 41), unless his own portion was greatly inferior to his brother’s?—which it could not have been had Jacob’s consisted merely of “corn and wine” (v. 37)!

But the difficulty which so many have felt in connection with the above, disappears at once when we discern the mystery contained in the language of that divine blessing which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob. Once it is clearly recognized that (oftentimes) in the Old Testament heavenly things were referred to in earthly terms, that spiritual blessings were set forth under the figure of material things, then many a passage at once becomes luminous. That there is no forced or arbitrary interpretation of ours is seen from Hebrews 12:17, where the Holy Spirit Himself has forever settled the meaning of the terms used in Genesis 27. Unless the *spiritual* blessings promised to God’s elect in Christ had been typically signified and mystically intended under those earthly things unto Jacob, the apostle had never been moved to say that Jacob inherited “*the* blessing” and Esau was “rejected,” for all such earthly blessings Esau *did* inherit in common with Jacob.

Is it not plain, then, dear reader, that there was *another* sort of “blessings,” which were latent and hid, even a substantial though invisible and spiritual kind of blessings for evermore, whereof the “corn and wine” promised Jacob, were but the shadows, and that it was *this* which made the tremendous and vital difference between the temporal things granted unto Esau? That is why Jacob’s portion is called “*the* blessing” (Heb 12:17). Observe too the emphasis made by Isaac in Genesis 27:33, I “have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed,” which imports that the same spiritual blessing God promised to Abraham was now made over by him to Jacob, for Jehovah

had employed the same language when blessing the father of all believers, saying, “In blessing I will bless thee” (Gen 22:17). Still further evidence of the identity of Abraham’s and Jacob’s portion is seen in the last words of Isaac concerning him, “Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee” (Gen 27:29)—omitted in what he said to Esau—being part of the very words God originally used to Abraham, *see* Genesis 12:2-3.

How low and mean are the thoughts which are now entertained by so many of the portion which God gave unto His people in the earlier ages of the world. What gross ignorance is betrayed by those who suppose that being blessed “in basket and in store” was the best that the *spiritual* in Israel received from God. Even the Old Testament itself contains much which condemns so gross a conception. Take the Psalms. There we read again and again of the “Blessed” man. Who is he? one possessing much land and great flocks and herds? No indeed. If you will read David’s description of him, says Paul, here it is, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom 4:7-8).

In the New Testament dispensation, the mystery hidden beneath the letter of the Old Testament—which was always known to the spiritual, but which was hidden from the natural man—is plainly expounded. Examples of this fact have been given above and they might easily be multiplied, but we will add one more. At the beginning of this dispensation, Peter, addressing his brethren after the flesh from the porch of the temple, said, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be *blessed*” (Act 3:25). To Peter’s hearers those words signified little or nothing more than they do unto the literalists of our day, understanding by them simply a reference to Canaan and temporal things. Therefore does Peter expound and say, “Unto you first God, having raised up [by incarnation] his Son Jesus, sent him to *bless* you, *in* turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Act 3:26).

In their gross carnality the Jews, whose eyes were veiled by the outward letter of promises earthly, looked for a Messiah who was to usher in an earthly kingdom, vested with material pomp and glory. But Peter announces something infinitely more blessed than if God should make all of His hearers mundane kings and emperors, namely deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. He mentions that one blessing for all the rest, to show what sort they are all of, and also because the one he specifies is the first and forerunner of all the others. In this the apostle was but following in the steps of his Master, for almost at the beginning of His ministry Christ had announced that the “blessed” were not the holders of high earthly offices or the possessors of much silver and gold, but the “poor in spirit,” the “meek,” the “pure in heart,” etc. (Mat 5).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). The “in heavenly places” or “in the heavenlies” in addition to “all spiritual blessings” calls for close attention. That this is not a synonymous addition as expressing God’s blessings by two words that signify one and the same thing is evident, because it is not said “spiritual” *and* “heavenly” nor “spiritual” *or* “heavenly.” All those blessings are spiritual and all were in the heavenlies in Christ. What, then, is the further and separate thought included by “in the heavenly places”? The “Dispensationalists” say it is in contrast from the earthly blessings which pertained unto the nation of Israel. But that is a mistake. The key which opens the answer to our question is found in the final words, “in the heavenly places *in Christ*.” Now when “in Christ” is used contrastively, it is always antithetical to “in Adam,” and never to Israel or the earth.

All the race was seminally in Adam's loins. Moreover, he was placed in Eden as the federal head and legal representative of his posterity. We were all created in Adam and we were all blessed in Adam, "and God *blessed* them, and said," etc. (Gen 1:28). Adam being made in God's image after his likeness (Gen 1:26) was, in that respect, a spiritual man, for such is the image of God, see Colossians 3:10. Adam's being in God's image was the foundation of that charter of blessing to him and his posterity. His graces were all spiritual and his life and communion with God was spiritual, and so of him it may be truly said that he was "blessed with spiritual blessings," as well as things which were earthly ("have thou dominion," etc.), yet, but as "flesh and blood" can in an earthly condition be capable of. And since we were then all of us "in Adam," we too were all blessed with spiritual blessings.

Nevertheless, Adam in his unfallen condition was but "flesh and blood" and an earthly man and could not enjoy God as He is to be seen and enjoyed in heaven. Hence the distinction drawn in 1 Corinthians 15:47, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." And as that earthly man was, such should we that are of him have remained had he not fallen, never advancing higher, 1 Corinthians 15:48. But Christ being the Lord from heaven, a heavenly Man, and we being "blessed" in Him and together with Him, are blessed in heavenly things or with heavenly blessings, and are raised up to heavenly places with Him (Eph 2:6), for as in the heavenly Man, Christ, such are (in status and state) those in Him. Heaven is Christ's native country, He is the Lord of it, and we being united to Him by covenant relationship and joined to Him in one spirit, must share His inheritance. Therefore has He affirmed "that where I am, there ye may be also" (Joh 14:3). Thus, God's favoured people are blessed *in Christ* with all heavenly blessings, and not spiritual only, which Adam (and the race in him) in his primitive condition was.

Now the sum and substance of the spiritual and heavenly blessings with which the entire election of grace were blessed in Christ, are described in the verses which immediately follow. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:4-6). In verse 3, praise is rendered unto God for His eternal *act* of "blessing" His people. In verses 4-6, we are shown how all blessings depend upon God's election in eternity past and likewise how all depends upon Jesus Christ. A parallel passage is found in 2 Timothy 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." All the "blessings" of Ephesians 1:3 are here expressed in the single term "grace."

How the blessings of Ephesians 1:3 are communicated to God's elect in a time-state or in other words, how "the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:11) is wrought out in human history is revealed in Ephesians 1:7-14. As will be seen at a glance at those verses, everything else is wrapped up in the first thing there mentioned, namely "redemption" through the blood of Christ. The consideration of this must be held over (D. V.) for the closing section of this article. Meanwhile we would urge the interested reader to prayerfully read and re-read what has already been said and to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Th 5:21).

# CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

## Part 2

Let me first restate the four principal points which occupied us this morning. First, there is an evangelical perfection in contrast from that absolute perfection which the law demands, God in His grace accepting from His people (through Christ) sincere obedience of the heart—that genuine desire and sincere effort to please Him in all things. Second, relative perfection in contrast from absolute. This is what distinguishes the Christian from the non-Christian. Third, perfection of parts, that is, the adding of one grace to another, so that a well-rounded Christian character and conduct is developed. Fourth, perfection of degrees, that is, growth from spiritual baby hood to youth and from youth to full maturity. It is after the third and fourth we should daily and prayerfully strive.

By way of application, let me point out first that the Christian ministry has been appointed by God for “the perfecting” of His saints, see Ephesians 4:11-12. God sends His servants that you may be instructed, nourished, sanctified. “Night and day” Paul “prayed exceedingly” that he should come unto the Thessalonian Christians and this that he “might perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (1Th 3:10). This is the yearning of every true servant of Christ’s. Second, our improvement of this means, the response which God requires His people to make unto the ministry of His servants, “As ye have received of us *how* ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more” (1Th 4:1). May this be true of you. Third, nothing short of this should be our aim and diligent endeavor, that you may “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col 4:12).

### I. Reasons Why We Must Be Perfect.

That is, not only sincere, with a heart desiring to and seeking after the glory of God, not only having all the spiritual parts of a Christian and striving after the highest possible growth, but that we may actually attain unto all that is possible for us in Christ in this life. First, we have to do with a perfect God and therefore we should seek perfection of character and conduct, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Mat 5:48). The main reason why God has been pleased to make known His attributes, to reveal unto us His perfections, is that we should take them for our copy. Second, a perfect standard is set before us and God will not lower it. To Abraham, He said, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1). Abraham is the father of us all (Rom 4:16, Gal 3:7), therefore what God says to him, He also says to us. Third, we have a perfect rule to regulate us, see 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Those verses show that the strictness of the law is embodied in the Gospel. The high standard which God has set up under the old covenant has not been lowered under the new covenant. The exhortations of the New Testament are but so many explanations and applications of the Ten Commandments. Fourth, we have a perfect and all-sufficient Redeemer to rely upon, Colossians 2:9. There is everything in

Christ which is needed by us and all that is in Him we may appropriate. God has not only given Christ *for* us, but He has given Him *to* us. *Christ Himself* is ours. O that the Holy Spirit may teach us how to draw from His infinite fullness.

## II. Motives to Stimulate.

First, all that we lost in Adam should be found again in Christ or we do not honour Him. The last Adam is far more able to save than the first Adam was to destroy, Romans 5:17—yet that “abundance of grace” has to be diligently sought. It is not given to the lazy and halfhearted. O that the Spirit may deeply impress each of our hearts with the fact that the more we “grow up into him in *all* things,” (Eph 4:15) the more Christ is glorified through us.

Second, we *pray* for perfection (at least, I hope we do) and therefore, should strive *after* it with all our might, otherwise our prayers are but a pretense. True prayer is a solemn binding of ourselves to use the means that we may obtain the blessings which we ask. If this be not the intention of our hearts, then our prayer is merely empty words. When we truly ask God to make us more holy, we pledge ourselves to use every means which makes for holiness, and strive our utmost to be holy. Prayer was never designed to be a substitute for diligent effort. Therefore, if we are praying for the highest perfection attainable in this life we must strive after it.

Third, we should remind ourselves more frequently of what we lose when we slacken in our efforts after spiritual growth. All around us we behold illustrations of the fact that God has closely linked together sin and misery, so also has He inseparably connected holiness and true happiness. Therefore we should consider how much we miss when we slacken in our efforts after Christian perfection. It is those who take Christ’s yoke upon them that find rest unto their souls. It is those who walk closest with Him that enter most into His joy. Not only so, but they who live a holy and happy life have a triumphant exit from this world, Psalm 37:37. Balaam said he wished that he might die the death of the righteous, but he was unwilling to live the life of the righteous. If our daily lives be right with God, He will look after us in death. This thought is also brought out in 2 Peter 1:11, which supplies the climax to the whole of that passage.

## III. Means to Help.

First, make sure that a divine work of grace has begun in you, and my friends, we cannot be too sure, nor be too diligent in the duty of self-examination. But there must be life before there can be growth. It is no use trying to grow if you do not have spiritual life. If you are in doubt, get alone with God and earnestly beseech Him to begin a good work in you. We must definitely choose God for our portion before we can cleave to and serve Him. Just as a young man selects his vocation or calling, and later chooses the woman to be his wife, so the Christian must definitely choose God. The enjoyment of God, the service of God, the pleasing of God, must become the soul’s portion for time and eternity, but we cannot cleave unto God, walk with Him, or go on with Him, until we first take Him for our portion. David said, “The Lord is my portion.”

Second, give special attention to the radical graces. Just as in our physical bodies there are some organs and members more vital than others, playing a larger part in determining whether we are well or sick, weak or strong, so there are certain graces in the Christian character which are more vital and radical than others. What these are is intimated in 1 Corinthians 13:13, faith, hope, and love. Let us be especially concerned to have a strong faith, a lively hope, and a fervent love. Remember that word of the Lord to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23. They were very careful about minor things, most punctilious about washing their hands, so particular they would not eat if the shadow of a Gentile even crossed their path. But God is not found in such things, neither is the spiritual life promoted by them. Give your attention to that which is vital and fundamental.

Third, seek grace to appropriate Philippians 4:13 and turn it into earnest prayer, “I can do *all* things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Unbelief says, I cannot. Previous failures say, I cannot. Past experience says, I cannot. The example of fellow-Christians says, I cannot. Satan tells me, I cannot. But faith says, I “*can* do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Turn that statement into believing, fervent, persistent prayer. Count upon God making it good. Fourth, remind yourself frequently that failure to strive hard and constantly after perfection dishonours Christ. O that the love of Christ may constrain us, that gratitude to Him will compel us to seek a closer conformity unto Him. The more I am like Him, the more I honour Him. The less I am like Him, the more I dishonour Him. We must realize this if our hearts are to be stirred up unto renewed efforts after perfection.

#### IV. Tests.

Here there are two extremes to guard against. On the one hand, the workings of pride, assuming that I have made more progress than is really the case. On the other hand (and to a genuine Christian, this danger is just as real), the workings of unbelief, a mock humility denying that I *have* made true progress. Now every real Christian should be anxious to know what measure of growth he has attained unto. You know how it is with growing children—how anxious they are to test themselves. They make a mark on the wall to register their height and in a month’s time see whether they have gone beyond it. So it should be with us spiritually. I am going to mention five things by which we should test ourselves concerning our growth.

First, increasing deadness to the world. The closer we approximate to Christian perfection, the deader will our hearts be unto the world. The more fully we are conformed unto the image of Christ, the less power will the world have to attract us. When I say that, I refer to something more than its amusements and grosser sins. I mean also its pretty things. One of the marks of a child is to value a thing not according to its worth and usefulness, but according to its attractiveness to the eye. There are many forms of worldliness. Isaiah 3:22 warns against “changeable suits of apparel”—such savors of pride. It is an unnecessary expense and it is a denial of our strangership.

The more we are really growing in grace the less shall we be attracted by such baubles and the more attention shall we give to the adorning of our souls. One half of practical godliness is a dying unto the world, the other half is a living unto God—the mortification of self-love and the strengthening of love to God. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal 6:14)—that is the language of a perfect Christian, that is the experience of a mature saint—dead to the world. It no longer has any attraction for him and no power over him.

Second, increasing dissatisfaction with our present attainments. Instead of being pleased with and proud of the progress he has made, the growing Christian increasingly mourns over the littleness of it, groans daily because of his sinful failures, and is burdened over his lack of conformity to Christ. Instead of self-complacency for having attained unto this or that, there is a realization that “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Jos 13:1). The nearer I come to real Christian perfection, the more imperfect I feel myself to be. Therefore, dear friends, the measure of spiritual growth you have made during the past year is the extent to which you have grown out of love with yourself.

Third, increasingly being moved by love rather than by fear. The weak and immature Christian is most obedient when he is most in fear of punishment from God—either fear of His law or fear of His chastisement. But the mature Christian, he who has grown in grace, is moved more by the love of God and love to God. This is what regulates his actions, “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2Co 5:14). The extent to which we have grown spiritually during the last

twelve months may be gauged by the measure in which our conduct is now regulated by love to Christ.

Fourth, increasing humility. Where there is real and deep humility, one sees more quickly and is more concerned about *his own* defects than those of his fellow Christians. A proud man is quick to note the faults of other people, but it takes a humble man to recognize and acknowledge his own. A babe in Christ is far more likely to be proud of his spiritual attainment than is a mature Christian. The latter is filled with self-aborrence. Thus, increasing holiness means increasing self-loathing.

Fifth, increasing deliverance from childishness. I believe the analogy holds good at every point between the natural and the spiritual. Let me name one or two points of resemblance. First, touchiness characterizes an infant. A little child will cry over every trifle, but as he gets older he outgrows that. The same holds good spiritually. Alas, that such growth does not always keep pace with the added years. Oftentimes one who has been a Christian for twenty years has really grown less than one who is only five years old spiritually. Where there is growth, one is less sensitive of being hurt over trifles.

Second, a child is regulated very largely by his senses, rather than by his reason. Take food as an example. If something looks nice, tastes nice, smells nice, the child wants it, whether or not it is good for him—he is regulated by his senses. But as he grows older, he learns that some things which look and smell good are injurious and so he learns to leave them alone. So it is spiritually. A developed Christian is regulated by his judgment rather than by his senses.

Third, a child is incapable of helping others very much. It is always needing attention itself. But as the child grows older, it increases in usefulness. It becomes able to help mother in the home and later on to do other things in the world. So it should be spiritually. That Christian who is all the time needing attention and help from others is not growing. He is only a spiritual babe.

Finally, a child is always getting into mischief or trouble, constantly doing something or other which it ought not, so that it is not safe to allow it to be long out of sight. But as it grows older, if it be properly trained, it grows out of that. Now, my friends, honestly measure yourselves by these tests.

In closing, let me say, praise God for any real growth that you can see has been wrought in you. To Him alone belongs all the glory. Strive earnestly after further growth, avoiding all things which hinder and retard it, making a diligent use of all the means of grace which God has appointed for the promotion of the same.

(An address [revised] given by the editor in his home to a little company last June.)

## TRUSTING GOD

Of himself, the Christian can no more regulate his faith than he could originate it. Only He who imparted it, can call it forth into action. This is recognized by few today. Even in those little groups where it is owned that faith is the gift of God (Eph 2:8-9; Phi 1:29), the majority appear to think it lies within their own power to exercise this spiritual grace. Even when it is allowed that a



spiritually dead soul cannot believe in a spiritual way, it is commonly supposed that only an effort of will is required in order for the living saint to lay hold of God's promises. Not so. It was to His regenerated disciples the Lord Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (Joh 15:5). In keeping with this, the apostle Paul declared, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18).

But why proclaim and press so discouraging a thing. Will not God's children be disheartened thereby? First, because it is the truth and the truth doeth "good" (not evil) to them that walk uprightly (Mic 2:7). Second, to counteract the haughty, independent, self-reliant spirit of the day. Anything that humbles the heart is salutary. Third, to emphasize the Christian's entire dependence upon God, not "that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves" (2Co 3:5). If we are incapable of so much as "thinking" a good thought of ourselves, how much less can we initiate a good work!

Yet while the divine Giver of faith can alone regulate and stimulate it, nevertheless, He is pleased to use means in so doing. One of these means is the exhortations of His own blessed Word. Such an exhortation we find in Psalm 62:8, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." But if fallen man and quickened saint be alike incapable of doing so, is not God mocking us by bidding us to "trust in him at all times"? Far be it from the puny creature to blasphemously charge the All-wise with foolishness. Better to say with the psalmist, in another connection, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me," (Psa 139:6) than to call them into question, much less deride them. In this case, however, a solution may be given. It is both the duty and the privilege of the Christian to beg God to work in and through him that which He requireth.

"Trust in him at all times" (Psa 62:8). And why not? Circumstances fluctuate, we ourselves vary, but *He* is immutable, "I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal 3:6). Blessed, assuring, comforting declaration. If God were fickle and unreliable faith would be without any foundation to rest upon, but because He is "the same yesterday and today and forever," (Heb 13:8) He may be safely confided in. Again, His promises are ever sure and they are given for faith to feed upon. None ever yet really truly grasped one of the divine promises and found it to fail him. Then why should we not "trust in him at all times"? It is for our own peace and good that we do so. It is our own great loss and misery if we do not.

Why does not the Christian trust in the Lord at "all times"? Because the root of unbelief still indwells him. Not yet is sin eradicated from our being. The "flesh" opposes the "spirit" every step of our journey toward heaven. "Fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12). The repetition of that word "fight" in such a short sentence plainly intimates opposition and a fierce contest. What, then, is the struggling Christian to do? Cry earnestly with one of old, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24). But alas, so often we make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof (Rom 13:14) and then the Spirit is grieved, and His enabling power is withheld.

But what is it to "*trust* in the LORD"? A very helpful answer to this question is supplied in 2 Kings 18:30, "Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us." The second clause explains the first. Trusting the Lord is the heart's assurance that He *will surely* "deliver." A signal illustration of His high sovereignty was this, God using a scoffing heathen to define for us the meaning of the word "trust." How it ought to shame us that an idolater had a clearer conception of what it means to "trust in the LORD" than many Christians have!

"To trust in God is to 'cast thy burden on the Lord,' when it is too heavy for our own shoulder (Psa 55:22); to dwell 'in the secret place of the Most High,' when we know not where to lay our

heads on earth (Psa 91:1); to look to our Maker and to ‘have respect to the Holy One of Israel’ (Isa 17:7); to lean on our Beloved (Song 8:5; Isa 36:6); to stay ourselves, when sinking, on the Lord our God (Isa 26:3). In a word, trust in God is that high act or exercise of faith whereby the soul, looking upon God and casting itself on His goodness, power, promises, faithfulness, and providence, is lifted up above carnal fears and discouragement, above perplexing doubts and disquietments, either for the obtaining and continuance of that which is good, or for the preventing or removal of that which is evil.

“There are some special instances and nicks of time for trust. 1. The time *of prosperity*. When we sit under the warm beams of a meridian sun, when we wash our steps in butter and feet in oil, when the candle of the Lord shines on our tabernacle, when ‘our mountain stands strong.’ Now, now is the time for trust, but not in our ‘mountain’ (for it is a mountain of ice and may soon dissolve), *but in our God*. Any gift or blessing which comes between the heart and the Lord is a snare and a curse.

“2. In times of *adversity*. This also is a seasonal time for trust. When we have no bread to eat, but that of ‘carefulness,’ nor wine to drink, but that of ‘affliction’ and ‘astonishment,’ no, nor water either, but that of our tears. Now is the time, not for our over-grieving, murmuring, sinking, despondency, but trusting. In a tempest, then, a believer thinks it seasonable to cast anchor upon God. Thus did good Jehoshaphat, ‘O our God...neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee’” (2Ch 20:12). (Thomas Lye, 1621-1684, from “Morning Exercises.”)

“Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us” (Psa 62:8). “The word ‘pour’ plainly signifies that the heart is full of grief and almost afraid to empty itself before the Lord. What does He say to you? ‘Come and pour out all your trouble before Me.’ He is never weary with hearing the complaints of His people. Therefore you should go and keep nothing back. Tell Him everything that hurts you and pour all your complaints into His merciful bosom. Make Him your Counselor and Friend. You cannot please Him better than when your hearts rely wholly upon Him. You may tell Him, if you please, you have been so foolish as to look to this friend and the other for relief, and found none and you now come to Him, who commands you to” (John Berridge, 1716-1793).

“Trust in the LORD at *all* times” (Psa 62:8). In times of persecution, as well as toleration; in times of famine, as well as plenty; in times of sickness, as well as health; in times when called to walk alone, as well as when enjoying the fellowship of Christians; in times of spiritual darkness and distress, as well as light and joy. “Trust *in* the LORD,” not merely *about* Him—in His love, His power, His faithfulness. Trust Him when His providences frown, His rod smites, His hand removes your most cherished idol. Trust Him in the worst case you have ever been in or can be in. The way to make a feast is to trust Him, and the way to have a continual feast, is to trust in Him at all times. The way to honour Him is to trust Him. The way to *prove* Him to be a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother is to trust in Him at all times.

## NOT ASHAMED

“They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied” (Psa 37:19). Of whom is this declaration made? Of all the children of God? No, indeed. Only of those who are truly “upright” (v. 18) in their hearts and ways. If the reader will look up and carefully weigh Job 1:1; Psalm 37:37; Proverbs 14:11; 15:8; 29:27 it should at once be seen that the “upright” are they who walk with God, are in subjection to God, and live only to the glory of God. The “upright” are contrasted from those whose hearts are “divided” (Hos 10:2)—half in heaven and half in the world; half occupied with God, half wrapped in self; and with real Christians who are in a backslidden state.

Now Psalm 37:19 plainly affirms that the “upright” shall not be ashamed in the evil time. And why? Because God is showing Himself strong on *their* behalf (2Ch 16:9) and doing for them what He is not doing for many others who bear His name. No good things do they lack (Psa 84:11). Having sought *first* God’s kingdom and righteousness (Mat 6:33), their needs are being freely and abundantly met. An “evil time” has now come upon this perishing world and we are acquainted with quite a number who are “*not* ashamed,” and who can joyfully exclaim, “The LORD is my helper” (Heb 13:6). On the other hand, we are acquainted with not a few real Christians who have every cause *to be* “ashamed,” for their present situation brings no glory unto God.

In an “evil time” like this, the lines ought to be so clearly drawn that even the world can discern “between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Mal 3:18). “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing” (Psa 34:10). Now let us ask our readers some plain questions. A few years back when “times” were “good” and money was plentiful, were you “seeking the LORD” when you bought a car for the pleasure of your family? Had you *His* glory in view when you purchased an electric sweeper, electric washer, electric refrigerator? You wish now that you had in cash the money you then put into such extravagances. Yes, so does the worldling. But have you confessed unto God the *sin* of such extravagance?

And what of the silk stockings, the “changeable suits of apparel” (Isa 3:22), and the many other luxuries which the worldlings were squandering their money upon? What too of being conformed unto the world in its wicked fashions—the “bobbed” hair, the short skirts, the sleeveless waists? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7). Having sown to the flesh, why think it strange if you are now reaping “corruption”? Perhaps some answer, But I was liberal in giving to the Lord’s cause in those days. Are you sure it was the Lord’s cause? Was the aiding in the erection of a costly “church house,” which still has a heavy *debt* upon it, “the Lord’s cause”?

Is there no remedy? Yes, thank God, there is. “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2Ch 7:14). Ah, notice

carefully what is said in the first clause. It is not “if the people,” but “if *my* people shall humble themselves.” How many Christians are genuinely surprised that we have not already witnessed a marked change on the part of the masses around us. But they need not be surprised. The “hard times” will make no impression for good on the multitudes until *God’s own people* humble *themselves* before Him! There is no need for the King of Great Britain or the President of the U.S.A. to appoint a day for national humiliation, fasting, and prayer until Christians first get right with God.

What is meant by God’s people “*humbling* themselves?” This—getting down on their knees before God and owning with shame-facedness the fleshly and worldly manner in which they lived during the years of plenty, truly repenting for and sorrowfully confessing their covetousness, their carnality, their wastefulness. Then there has to be a sincere forsaking in full purpose of heart any continuance or repetition of their past Christ-dishonouring ways. Coupled with this must be the *exercise of faith*, that a merciful God will hear the penitent sobbings of a contrite heart, that He will graciously forgive, that He will blot out even the *effects* of their sins, and now “heal their land,” their present case, and circumstances. Not only must the four conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 be met, but the three closing promises of it must be trustfully appropriated and earnestly and persistently pleaded before God. Reader, let not the devil put you off by saying that *you* were not guilty of such extravagance as were many of your neighbors, for most probably you *were* proportionately, and according to your station in life, no more self-denying or thrifty than they. May the Lord search each of our hearts, quicken our memories, and convict our consciences.



# May

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 5. The Covenant Offices of the Holy Spirit

The ground which we are now to tread will, we fear, be new and strange to most of our readers. In the January and February 1930 issues of this magazine, we wrote two rather lengthy articles upon “The Everlasting Covenant.” There we dwelt principally upon it in connection with the Father and Son. Here we shall contemplate the relation of the Holy Spirit unto the same. His covenant-offices are intimately connected with and indeed flow from His deity and personality (which we have already considered in the preceding papers of this series), for if He had not been a divine person in the Godhead, He would not and could not have taken a part in the covenant of grace. Before proceeding further, let us define our terms.

By the “covenant of grace,” we refer to that holy and solemn compact entered into between the august Persons of the Trinity on behalf of the elect, before the foundation of the world. By the word “offices,” we understand the whole of that part of this sacred compact which the Holy Spirit undertook to perform. Lest some should suppose that the application of such a term to the third Person of the Godhead be derogatory to His ineffable majesty, let us point out that it by no means implies subordination or inferiority. It signifies literally a particular charge, trust, duty, or employment, conferred for some public or beneficial end. Hence we read of “the priest’s office” (Exo 28:1; Luk 1:8), the apostolic “office” (Rom 11:13), etc.

There is then no impropriety in using the word “office” to express the several parts which the Son and the blessed Spirit undertook in the covenant of grace. As Persons in the Trinity, they were equal; as covenanting Parties they were equal; and as they in infinite condescension, undertook to communicate to the church unutterable favours and blessings, their kind offices, so graciously and voluntarily entered into, neither destroy nor diminish that original equality in which they from all eternity subsisted in the perfection and glory of the divine essence. As Christ’s susception of the “office” of “Servant” in nowise tarnished or canceled His equality as the “Son,” so the Spirit’s free undertaking the office of *applying* the benefits of the Everlasting covenant to its beneficiaries, in nowise detracts from His essential and personal honour and glory.

The word “office,” then, as applied to the covenant-work of the Holy Spirit, denotes that which He graciously undertook to perform by way of stipulated engagement and sets forth, under one comprehensive term, the whole of His blessed pledgings and performances on behalf of the

election of grace. To an enlightened understanding and a believing heart, there is in the covenant itself—in the fact of it and the provisions of it—something singularly marvelous and precious. That there should have been a covenant at all, that the three Persons in the Godhead should have designed to enter into a solemn compact on behalf of a section of the fallen, ruined, and guilty race of mankind, should fill our minds with holy wonderment and adoration. But how firm a foundation was thus laid for the salvation of the church. No room was allowed for contingencies, no place left for uncertainties. Her being and well-being was forever secured by unalterable compact and eternal decree.

Now the “office-work” of the Holy Spirit, in connection with this “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure” (2Sa 23:5), may be summed up in a single word, *sanctification*. The third Person of the Holy Trinity agreed to sanctify the objects of the Father’s eternal choice and of the Son’s redemptive satisfaction. The Spirit’s work of sanctification was just as needful, yea, as indispensable for the church’s salvation, as was the obedience and blood-shedding of Christ. Adam’s fall plunged the church into immeasurable depths of woe and wretchedness. The image of God, in which her members had been created, was defaced. Sin, like a loathsome leprosy, infected them to the very heart’s core. Satan tyrannizing over her, dragging her without help or hope towards the brink of the bottomless pit. Spiritual death spreading itself with fatal effect over her every faculty. But the gracious Holy Spirit pledged Himself to sanctify such wretches, and frame and fit them to be partakers of holiness, and live forever in God’s spotless presence.

Without the Spirit’s sanctification, the redemption of Christ would avail no man. True, a perfect atonement was made by Him and a perfect righteousness brought in, and so the persons of the elect are legally reconciled to God. But Jehovah is holy as well as just and the employments and enjoyment of His dwelling place are holy too. Holy angels there minister, whose unceasing cry is “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts” (Isa 6:3). How then could unholy, unregenerate, unsanctified sinners dwell in that ineffable place into which “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie” (Rev 21:27)? But O the wonder of covenant grace and covenant love! The vilest of sinners, the worst of wretches, the basest of mortals, can and will enter through the gates into the Holy City, “And such *were* some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by *the Spirit of our God*” (1Co 6:11).

From what has been said in the last paragraph, it should be clear that sanctification is as indispensable as justification. Now there are many phases presented in Scripture of this important truth of sanctification, into which we cannot here enter. Suffice it to say that that aspect of it which is now before us is the blessed work of the Spirit upon the soul, whereby He internally makes the saints meet for their inheritance in the light (Col 1:12). Without this miracle of grace none can enter heaven. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (Joh 3:6). No matter how it be educated and refined, no matter how disguised by religious ornamentation, it remains flesh still. It is like everything else which earth produces. No manipulation of art can change the original nature of the raw material.

No process of manufacture can transmute cotton into wool, or flax into silk. Draw, twist, spin or weave, bleach, and surface all we may, its nature remains the same. So men-made preachers and the whole corps of creature religionists may toil night and day to change flesh into spirit, they may work from the cradle to the grave to fit people for heaven, but after all their labours to wash the Ethiopian white and to rub the spots out of the leopard, flesh is flesh still, and cannot by any possibility enter the kingdom of God. Nothing but the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit

will avail. Not only is man polluted to the very core by sin original and actual, but there is in him an absolute incapability to understand, embrace, or enjoy spiritual things, 1 Corinthians 2:14.

The imperative necessity, then, of the Spirit's work of sanctification lies not only in the sinfulness of man, but in the state of spiritual death whereby he is as unable to live, breathe, and act Godward as the corpse in the graveyard is unable to leave the silent tomb and move among the busy haunts of men. We indeed know little of the Word of God and little of our own hearts if we need proof of a fact which meets us at every turn. The vileness of our nature, the thorough deathliness of our carnal heart are so daily and hourly forced upon us that they are as much a matter of painful consciousness to the Christian, as if we should see the sickening sight of a slaughterhouse, or smell the death taint of a corpse.

Suppose a man is born blind. He has a natural incapacity of sight. No arguments, biddings, threats, or promises can make him see. But let a miracle be wrought. Let the Lord touch the eyes with His divine hand, he sees at once. Though he cannot explain how or why, he can say to all objectors, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (Joh 9:25). And thus it is in the Spirit's work of sanctification begun at regeneration, when a new life is given, a new capacity imparted, a new desire awakened. It is carried forward in His daily renewings (2Co 4:16) and is completed at glorification. What we would specially emphasize is that whether the Spirit be convicting us, working repentance in us, breathing upon us the spirit of prayer, or taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto our joyful hearts, He is discharging His covenant offices. May we render unto Him the praise and worship which is His due.

N.B. For most of the above we are indebted to some articles by the late J.C. Philpot (1802-1869).

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 65. The Faith of Abraham (11:17-19)

This chapter is the chronology of faith or a record of some of the outstanding acts which that grace has produced in all ages. The apostle having mentioned the works wrought by the faith of those who lived before the Flood (vv. 4-7), and having spoken of the patriarchs in general (vv. 9-16), now mentions them in detail. He begins again with that of Abraham, who in this glorious constellation shines forth as a star of the first magnitude and therefore is fittingly styled the father of the faithful. Three principal products of his faith are here singled out—his leaving the land of his birth upon the call of God (v. 8); the manner of his life in Canaan, sojourning in tents (v. 9); and his offering up of Isaac. The first pictures conversion, the second the Christian's life in this world, the third the triumphant consummation of faith.

Among all the actings of Abraham's faith nothing was more remarkable and noteworthy than the offering up of his son Isaac. Not only was it the most wonderful work of faith ever wrought, and therefore is the most illustrious of all examples for us to follow (the life and death of Christ alone excepted), but it also supplies the most blessed shadowing out of the love of God the Father

in the gift of His dear Son. The resemblances pointed by the type are numerous and striking. Abraham offered up a son, his only begotten son. Abraham delivered up his son to a sacrificial death and in purpose, smote him. But observe too how the antitype excelled the type. Abraham's son was only a man. Abraham offered up Isaac under divine command. God was under no constraint, but gave Christ freely. Abraham's son suffered not. Christ did.

Let it not be forgotten that the chief design before the apostle throughout this chapter was to demonstrate unto his tried brethren the great efficacy of faith—its power to sustain a very great trial, to perform a very difficult duty, and to obtain a very important blessing. Unmistakably were these three things illustrated in the case we are now to consider. As we have already seen, it was not without good reason that Abraham is designated the father of all who believe. But among all the actings of his faith, none was more memorable than its exercise upon Mount Moriah. If we consider the object of it, the occasion of it, the hindrances which stood in his way, and his blessed victory, we cannot but admire and wonder at the power of divine grace triumphing over the weakness of the flesh.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son” (Heb 11:17). For a clearer understanding of this verse, we need to consult Genesis 22. There we read, “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen 22:1-2). The whole of what follows in Genesis 22, to the end of verse 19, should be carefully read. Before attempting to expound our present verse and make application to ourselves of its practical teachings, let us seek to remove one or two difficulties which may stand in the way of the thoughtful reader.

First, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.” The word “offered up” is the same that is used for slaying and offering up sacrifices. Here then is the problem—how could Abraham “offer up” his son *by faith*, seeing that it was against both the law of nature and the law of God for a man to slay his own son? Genesis 22:2, however, shows that his faith had a sure foundation to rest upon, for the Lord Himself had commanded him so to do. But this only appears to remove the difficulty one stage farther back. God Himself had laid it down as a law that “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen 9:6). True, but though His creatures are bound by the laws He has prescribed them, God Himself is not.

God is under no law, but is absolute Sovereign. Moreover, He is the Lord of life, both Giver and Preserver of it and therefore has He an indisputable right to dispose of it, to take it away when He pleases, by what means or instruments He sees fit. God possesses supreme authority and when He pleases sets aside His own laws or issues new ones contrary to those given previously. By His own imperial fiat, Jehovah now, by special and extraordinary command, constituted it a duty for Abraham to do what before had been a sin. In similar manner, He who gave commandment, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness” (Exo 20:4), ordered Moses *to make* a brazen serpent (Num 21:8)! Learn, then, that God is bound by no law, being above all law.

Second, but how could it be truly said that Abraham “offered up Isaac,” seeing that he did not actually slay him? In regard to his willingness, in regard to his set purpose, and in regard to God's acceptance of the will for the deed, he *did* do so. There was no reserve in his heart and there was no failure in his honest endeavors. He took the three days' journey to the appointed place of sacrifice. He bound Isaac unto the altar and took the knife into his hand to slay him. And God accepted the will for the deed. This exemplifies a most important principle in connection with



God's acceptance of the Christian's obedience. The terms of His law have not been lowered. God still requires of us personal, perpetual, and perfect obedience. But this we are unable to render to Him while in our present state. And so, for Christ's sake, where the heart (at which God ever looks) *truly desires* to fully please Him in all things and makes an honest and *sincere effort* to do so, God graciously accepts the will for the deed. Carefully ponder 2 Corinthians 8:12 which illustrates the same blessed fact and note the word "willing" in Hebrews 13:18!

Third, the statement made in Genesis 22:1, "God did tempt Abraham," or as our text says, "when he was tried," for that is exactly what both the original Hebrew and Greek word signifies—to make trial of. "It is an act of God whereby He proveth and makes experience of the loyalty and obedience of His servants" (William Perkins, 1558-1602). And this *not* for His own information (for He "understandeth my thought afar off," Psa 139:2), but for their own knowledge and that of their fellows. Christ put the rich young ruler to the proof when He said, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (Mat 19:21). So too He made trial of the Canaanite woman when He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (Mat 15:26).

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac" (Heb 11:17). In order to understand and appreciate the fact that it was "by *faith*" Abraham offered up Isaac, we must examine more closely the nature of that test to which the Lord submitted the one whom He condescended to call His "friend" (Isa 41:8). In bidding him to sacrifice his beloved son, that ordeal combined in it various and distinct features. It was a testing of his submission or loyalty to God. It was a testing of his affections, as to whom he really loved the more—God or Isaac. It was a testing of which was the stronger within him—grace or sin, but supremely, it was a testing of his *faith*.

Carnal writers see in this incident little more than a severe trial of Abraham's natural affections. It cannot be otherwise, for water never rises above its own level and carnal men are incapable of discerning spiritual things. But it is to be carefully noted that Hebrews 11:17 does not say, "In submission to God's holy will, Abraham offered up Isaac," though that was true, nor "out of supreme love for God he offered his son," though that was also the case. Instead, the Holy Spirit declares that it was "by faith" that the patriarch acted declaring, "He that had *received the promises* offered up his only begotten son." Most of the modern commentators, filled with fleshly sentiment rather than with the Holy Spirit, completely miss this point, which is the central beauty of our verse. Let us seek then to attend unto it the more particularly.

In calling upon Abraham to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering, the Lord submitted his faith to a fiery ordeal. How so? Because God's promises to Abraham concerning his "seed" centered in Isaac, and in bidding him slay his only son, He appeared to contradict Himself. Ishmael had been cast out and Isaac's posterity alone was to be reckoned to Abraham as the blessed seed among whom God would have His church. Isaac had been given to Abraham after he had long gone childless and when Sarah's womb was dead, therefore there was no likelihood of his having any more sons by her. At the time, Isaac himself was childless and to kill him looked like cutting off all his hopes. How then could Abraham reconcile the divine command with the divine promise? To sacrifice his son and heir was not only contrary to his natural affections, but opposed to carnal reason as well.

In like manner, God tests the faith of His people today. He calls upon them to perform acts of obedience which are contrary to their natural affections and which are opposed to carnal reason. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mat 16:24). How many a Christian has had his or her affections drawn out toward a non-Christian and then has come to them that piercing word, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2Co 6:14)! How many a child of God has had his membership in a "church" where he saw that

Christ was dishonoured, to heed that divine command, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2Co 6:17) entailed leaving behind those near and dear in the flesh, but the call of God could not be disregarded, no matter how painful obedience to it might be.

But when are we put to such a trial as to offer up our Isaac? To this question the Puritan Thomas Manton (1620-1677) returned a threefold answer. First, in the case of *submission* to the strokes of providence, when near relations are taken away from us—God knows how to strike us in the right vein. There will be the greatest trial where our love is set. Second, in case of *self-denial*, forsaking our choicest interests for a good conscience—we must not only part with mean things, but such as we prize above anything in the world. When God requires it (as He did with the writer) that we should forsake father and mother, we must not demur. Nay, our lives should not be dear unto us (Act 20:24). Third, in *mortifying* our bosom lust—this is what is signified by cutting off a “right hand” or plucking out a “right eye” (Mat 5:29-30).

Let us notice the *time* when Abraham was thus tested. The Holy Spirit has emphasized this in Genesis 22:1, by saying, “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham.” A double reference seems to be made in these words. First, a general one to all the preceding trials which Abraham had endured—his journey to Canaan, his sojourning there in tents, the long, long wait for the promised heir. Now that he had passed through a great fight of afflictions, he is called upon to suffer a yet severer test. Ah, God educates His children little by little. As they grow in grace, harder tasks are assigned them and deeper waters are called upon to be passed through, that enlarged opportunities may be afforded for manifesting their increased faith in God. It is not the raw recruit, but the scarred veteran, who is assigned a place in the front ranks in the battle. Think it not strange then fellow-Christian if thy God is now appointing thee severer tests than He did some years ago.

Second, a more specific reference is made in Genesis 22:1 to what is recorded in the previous chapter—the miraculous birth of Isaac, the great feast that Abraham made, when he was weaned (v. 8), and the casting out of Ishmael (v. 14). The cup of the patriarch’s joy was now full. His outlook seemed most promising, not a cloud appeared on the horizon. Yet it was then, like a heavy clap of thunder out of a clear sky, that the most trying test of all came upon him! Yes, and so it was just after God had pronounced Job, “a perfect and an upright man,” that He delivered all that he had into Satan’s hands (Job 1:8-12). So too it was when Paul had been rapt to the third heaven, when he received such “abundance of revelations,” that there was given him “a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2Co 12:1-7).

How we need to seek grace that we may be enabled to hold everything down here with a light hand. Rightly did an old writer say, “Build not thy nest on any earthly tree, for the whole forest is doomed to be cut down.” It is not only for God’s glory, but for our own good that we set our affections upon “things above.” And in view of what has just been before us, how necessary it is that we should *expect* and seek in advance to be prepared for severe trials. Are we not bidden to “hear for the time to come” (Isa 42:23)? The more we calmly anticipate future trials, the less likely are we to be staggered and overcome by them when they arrive, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1Pe 4:12).

Having observed the time when Abraham was tested, let us now consider the *severity* of his trial. And first, *the act* itself. Abraham was ordered to slay, not all his bullocks and herds, but a human being, and that not one of his faithful servants, but his beloved son. Abraham was bidden not to banish him from home or send him out of Canaan, but to cut him off out of the land of the

living. He was commanded to do a thing for which no reason could be assigned save the authority of Him who gave the command. He was bidden to do that which was most abhorrent to natural feeling. He must not only consent unto the death of his dear Isaac, but himself be his executioner. He was to slay one who was guilty of no crime, but who (according to the divine record) was an unusually dutiful, loving, and obedient child. Was ever such a demand made upon a human creature before or since!

Second, consider *the offerer*. In our text, he is presented in a particular character, “He that had received the promises,” which is the key clause to the verse. God had declared unto Abraham that He would establish an everlasting covenant with Isaac and with his seed after him (Gen 17:9). Isaac, and none other, was the “seed” by whose posterity Canaan should be possessed (Gen 12:7). It was through him that all nations should be blessed (Gen 17:7) and therefore it must be through him that Christ, according to the flesh, would proceed. These promises Abraham had “received.” He had given credit for them, firmly believed them, fully expected their performance. Now the accomplishment of those promises depended upon the preservation of Isaac’s life—at least until he had a son and to sacrifice him now, appeared to render them all null and void making their fulfillment impossible.

“He that had received the promises” (Heb 11:17)—“which noteth not only the revelation of the promises, concerning a numerous issue, and the Messiah to come of his loins, but the entertaining of them and cordial assent to them. He received them not only as a private believer, but as a free offer in trust for the use of the church. In the first ages of the world, God had some eminent persons who received a revelation of His will in the name of the rest. This was Abraham’s case and he is here viewed not only as a father, a loving father, but as one who had received the promises as a public person and father of the faithful—the person whom God had chosen in whom to deposit the promises” (Thomas Manton). Herein lay the *spiritual* acuteness of the trial—would he not in slaying Isaac be faithless to his trust? would he not by his own act place the gravestone on all hope for the fulfillment of such promises?

Forcibly did Matthew Henry (1662-1714), when commenting upon the time at which Abraham received this trying command from God, say, “After he had received the promises that this Isaac should build up his family and that ‘in Isaac shall thy seed be called’ (Heb 11:18), and that he should be one of the progenitors of the Messiah, and all nations blessed in Him, so that in being called to offer up his Isaac, he seemed to be called to destroy and cut off his own family, to cancel the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, to destroy the whole truth, to sacrifice his own soul and his hope of salvation, to cut off the church of God at one blow—a most terrible trial!” If Isaac were slain, then *all* seemed to be lost.

It may be asked, “But *why* should God thus try the faith of the patriarch?” For Abraham’s own sake that he might the better know the efficacy of that grace which God had bestowed upon him. As the suspending of a heavy weight upon a chain reveals either its weakness or its strength, so God places His people in varied circumstances which manifest the state of their hearts—whether or no their trust be really in Him. The Lord tried Hezekiah to show unto him his frailty (2Ch 32:31). He tried Job to show that, though He slew him, yet would he trust in God. Second, for the sake of others, that Abraham might be an example to them. God had called him to be the father of the faithful and therefore would He show unto all generations of his children what grace He had conferred upon him—what a worthy “father” or pattern he was (condensed from William Gouge, 1575-1653).

In like manner, God tries His people today and puts to the proof the grace which He has communicated to their hearts, this, both for His own glory and for their own comfort. The Lord is

determined to make it manifest that He has on earth a people who will forsake any comfort and endure any misery rather than forego their plain duty, who love Him better than their own lives, and who are prepared to trust Him in the dark. So too we are the gainers, for we never have clearer proof of the reality of grace than when we are under sore trials. “Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom 5:3-4). As another has said, “By knocking upon the vessel we see whether it is full or empty, cracked or sound—so by these knocks of providence we are discovered.”

Rightly did John Owen (1616-1683) point out, “Trials are the only touchstone of faith, without which men must want [lack] the best evidence of its sincerity and efficacy, and the best way of testifying it unto others. Wherefore we ought not to be afraid of trials, because of the admirable advantages of faith, in and by them.” Yea, the Word of God goes farther and bids us, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” or “trials,” declaring “that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Jam 1:2-4). So too, “Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: [or “trials”] that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” 1Pe 1:6-7.).

In conclusion, let us observe how Abraham conducted himself under this sore trial, “He that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son” (Heb 11:18). Many instructive details concerning this are recorded in Genesis 22. There it will be found that Abraham consulted not with Sarah—why should he, when he already *knew* God’s will on the matter! Nor was there any disputing with God, as to the apparently flagrant discrepancy between His present command and His previous promises. Nor was there any delay, “And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him” (Gen 22:3). And how is his unparalleled action to be accounted for? From what super-fleshly principle did it spring? A single word gives the answer, FAITH. Not a theoretical faith, not a mere head-knowledge of God, but a real, living, spiritual, triumphant, *faith*.

“By *faith* Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac” (Heb 11:18). By faith in the divine justice and wisdom behind the command so to act. By faith in the veracity and faithfulness of God to make good His own promises. Fully assured that God was able to fulfill His word, Abraham closed his eyes to all difficulties and steadfastly counted upon the power of Him that cannot lie. This is the very nature or character of a *spiritual* faith. It persuades the soul of God’s absolute supremacy, unerring wisdom, unchanging righteousness, infinite love, almighty power. In other words, it rests upon the *character* of the living God and trusts Him in the face of every obstacle. Spiritual faith makes its favoured possessor judge that the greatest suffering is better than the least sin, yea, it unhesitatingly avows, “Thy loving kindness is better than life” (Psa 63:3).

We must leave for our next article the consideration of the remainder of our passage. But in view of what has already been before us, is not both writer and reader constrained to cry unto God, “Lord, have mercy upon me! Pardon my vile unbelief and graciously subdue its awful power. Be pleased, for Christ’s sake, to work in me that spiritual and supernatural faith which will honour Thee and bear fruits to Thy glory. And if Thou hast, in Thy discriminating grace, already communicated to me this precious, precious gift, then graciously deign to strengthen it by the power of Thy Holy Spirit. Call it forth into more frequent exercise and action. Amen.”

We trust that all American readers are praying daily for the President and his Cabinet, see 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### 17. His Affront from Nabal

The incident which is now to engage our attention may seem, at first sight, to contain in it little of practical importance for our hearts. If so, we may be sure that our vision is dim. There is nothing trivial in Holy Writ. Everything which the Spirit has recorded therein has a voice for us, if only we will seek the hearing ear. Whenever we read a portion of God's Word and find therein little suited to our own case and need, we ought to be humbled—the fault is in us. This should at once be acknowledged unto God and a spiritual quickening of soul sought from Him. There should be a definite asking Him to graciously anoint our eyes (Rev.3:18), not only that we may be enabled to behold wondrous things in His law, but also that He will make us of quick discernment to perceive how the passage before us applies to ourselves

It is the *practical* lessons to be learned from each section that all of us are in so much need of, and this is uppermost in our minds in the composing of this present series of articles. What, then, is there here for us to take to heart? David, in his continued wanderings, applies to a well-to-do farmer for some rations for his men. The appeal was suitably timed, courteously worded, and based upon a weighty consideration. The request was presented not to a heathen, but to an Israelite, to a member of his own tribe, to a descendant of Caleb. In short, to one from whom he might reasonably expect a favourable response. Instead, he met with a rude rebuff and a provoking insult. Obviously, there is a *warning* here for us in the despicable meanness of Nabal, which must be turned into prayer for divine grace to preserve us from being inhospitable and unkind to God's servants.

But it is with David that we are chiefly concerned. In our last three lessons, we have seen him conducting himself with becoming mildness and magnanimity, showing mercy unto the chief of his enemies. There we saw him resisting a sore temptation to take matters into his own hands and make an end of his troubles by slaying the chief of his persecutors, when he was thoroughly in his power. But here our hero is seen in a very different light. He meets with another trial, a trial of a much milder nature, yet instead of overcoming evil with good, he was in imminent danger of being overcome with evil. Instead of exercising grace, he is moved with a spirit of revenge. Instead of conducting himself so that the praises of God are *shown* forth (1Pe 2:9), only the works of the flesh are seen. Alas, how quickly had the fine gold become dim! And how are we to account for this? and what are the lessons to be learned from it?

Is the reader surprised as he turns from the blessed picture presented in the second half of 1 Samuel 24 and ponders the almost sordid actions of David in the very next chapter? Is he puzzled to account for the marked lapse in the conduct of him who had acted so splendidly toward Saul? Is he at a loss to explain David's spiteful attitude toward Nabal? If so, he must be woefully

ignorant of *his own* heart and has yet to learn a most important lesson—that no man stands a moment longer than divine grace upholds him. The strongest are weak as water immediately the power of the Spirit is withdrawn. The most mature and experienced Christian acts foolishly the moment he be left to himself. None of us has any reserve strength or wisdom in himself to draw from. Our source of sufficiency is *all* treasured up for us in Christ, and as soon as communion with Him be broken, as soon as we cease looking alone to Him for help, we are helpless.

What has just been stated above is acknowledged as true by God's people in general, yet many of their thoughts and conclusions are glaringly inconsistent therewith—or why be so surprised when they hear of some eminent saint experiencing a sad fall! The “eminent saint” is not the one who has learned to walk alone, but he who most feels his need of leaning harder upon the “everlasting arms.” The “eminent saint” is not the one who is no longer tempted by the lusts of the flesh and harassed by the assaults of Satan, but he who knows that in the flesh there dwelleth no good thing and that only *from Christ* can his “fruit” be found (Hos 14:8). Looked at in themselves, the “fathers” in Christ are just as frail and feeble as the “babes” in Christ. Left to themselves, the wisest Christians have no better judgment than has the new convert. Whether God is pleased to leave us upon earth another year or another hundred years, all will constantly need to observe that word, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mat 26:41)

And God has many ways of teaching us the “weakness” of the flesh. One of these receives striking illustration in the incident to be before us and which has no doubt been painfully realized in the experience of each Christian reader. That in some great crisis, we have been enabled to stand our ground, strong in faith, whereas before some petty trial, we have broken down and acted as a man of the world would act. It is thus that God stains our pride, subdues our self-sufficiency, and brings us to the place of more real and constant dependence upon Himself. The “little foxes” (Song 2:15) spoil the vines and it is our reaction unto the lesser irritations of everyday life which most reveal us to ourselves—humbling us through our failures and fitting us to bear with more patience the infirmities of our brethren and sisters in Christ.

Who would have thought that he who had taken so meekly the attacks of the king upon his life, should have waxed so furious when a farmer refused a little food for his men! Rightly did Thomas Scott (1747-1821) point out, “David had been on his guard against anger and revenge when most badly used by Saul, but he did not expect such reproachful language and insolent treatment from Nabal. He was therefore wholly put off his guard and in great indignation he determined to avenge himself.” Lay this well to heart dear reader—a small temptation is likely to prevail after a greater has been resisted. Why so? Because we are less conscious of our need of God's delivering grace. Peter was bold before the soldiers in the Garden, but became fearful in the presence of a maid. But it is time for us to consider some of the details of our passage.

“And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah” (1Sa 25:1). How often will people sorrow outwardly for one when dead to whom they did not care to listen when living. There had been a time when Samuel was appreciated by Israel, particularly when they were feeling the pressure of the Philistine yoke, but more recently he has been despised (1Sa 8). They had preferred a king to the prophet, but now Saul was proving such a disappointment, and the breach between the king and David showed no signs of being healed, they lamented the removal of Samuel.

“And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran” (1Sa 25:1). David too was despised by the greater part of the nation. Once he had been the hero of their songs, but now he was homeless, outlawed, and few cared to own him. Learning of Samuel's death, he probably

thought that his danger was greater than ever, for the prophet was more than friendly disposed toward him. He no doubt concluded that Saul's malice would be now more unrestrained than ever. Taking advantage of "all the Israelites" being gathered together, to mourn the death of Samuel, he left Engedi to sojourn for a while in other parts. But let us note well the ominous hint given in the words "and *went down* to the wilderness of Paran."

We have next presented to our notice the one to whom David made his appeal (1Sa 25:2-3). From the character given to him by the Holy Spirit, not much good might be expected from him. His name was "Nabal" which signifies "a fool," and none is a greater fool than he who thinks only of number one. He was a descendant of Caleb, which is mentioned here as an aggravation of his wickedness, that he should be the degenerate plant of so noble a vine. We are told that this man was "very great," not in piety, but in material possessions, for he had very large flocks of sheep and goats. His wife was of a beautiful countenance "and of good understanding," but her father could not have been so or he would not have sacrificed her to a man who had nothing better to recommend him than earthly wealth. Poor woman! she was tied to one who was "churlish and evil in his doings," greedy and grasping, sour and cross-tempered.

"And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name" (vv. 4, 5). The season for shearing the sheep was a notable one, for wool was a leading commodity in Canaan. With such a very large flock, a considerable number of extra hands would have to be hired by Nabal and a plentiful supply of provisions prepared. From 2 Samuel 13:23, it appears that it was the custom in those days to combine feasting and merriment with the shearing, compare also Genesis 38:13. It was a time when men were generally disposed to be hospitable and kind. As to how far David was justified in appealing to man, rather than spreading his need before God alone, we undertake not to decide—it is certainly not safe to draw any inference from the sequel.

"And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David" (vv. 6-8). The request to be presented before Nabal was one which the world would call respectful and tactful. The salutation of peace bespoke David's friendly spirit. Reminder was given that, in the past, David had not only restrained his men from molesting Nabal's flocks, but had also protected them from the depredation of invaders—compare verses 14-17. He might then have asked for a reward for his services, but instead he only supplicates a favour. Surely Nabal would not refuse his men a few victuals, for it was "a good day," a time when there was plenty to hand. Finally David takes the place of a "son," hoping to receive some fatherly kindness from him.

But as we examine this address more closely, we note the low ground which was taken—there was nothing spiritual in it! Moreover, we fully agree with Matthew Henry's comments on the opening words of verse 6. "Thus shall ye say to him that liveth," "As if those lived indeed, that lived as Nabal did, with abundance of the wealth of this world about them; whereas, in truth, those that live in pleasure are dead while they live (1 Tim. 5:6). This was, methinks, too high a compliment to pass upon Nabal, to call him the man that liveth: David knew better things—that 'in God's favour is life', not in the world's smiles; and, by the rough answer, he was well enough served for this too smooth address to such a muck worm."

“And when David’s young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased” (1Sa 25:9). This verse serves to illustrate another important principle—not only are God’s children more or less *revealed* by their reaction to and conduct under the varied experiences they encounter, but the presence of God’s servants *test* the character of those with whom they come into contact. It was so here. A golden opportunity was afforded Nabal of showing kindness to the Lord’s “anointed,” but he seized it not. Alas, how many there are who know not the day of their visitation. Nabal had no heart for David and clearly was this now made manifest. So too the selfishness and carnality of professors frequently become apparent by their failures to befriend the servants of God, when chances to do so are brought right to their door. It is a grand and holy privilege when the Lord sends one of His prophets into your neighbourhood, yet it may issue in a fearfully solemn sequel.

“And Nabal answered David’s servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?” (vv. 10-11). What an insulting answer to return unto so mild a request! To justify a refusal, he stooped to heaping insults on the head of David. It was not a total stranger who had applied to him, for Nabal’s calling him “the son of Jesse” showed he knew well who he was, but absorbed with schemes of selfish acquisition, he cared not for him. Let it be duly noted that in acting in such a heartless manner, Nabal clearly disobeyed Deuteronomy 15:7-11. Nabal’s repeated use of the word “my” in verse 11 reminds us of the other rich “fool” in Luke 12:18-20.

“So David’s young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings (v. 12). Highly commendable was their conduct. “Young men” are often hot-blooded and hot-headed, and act impetuously and rashly, but they admirably restrained themselves. The language of Nabal had been highly offensive, but instead of returning railing for railing, they treated him with silent contempt and turned their backs upon him. Such churls are not entitled to any reply. It is blessed to see they did not use force and attempt to take what ought to have been freely given to them. Never are the children of God justified in so doing. We must ever seek grace to maintain a good conscience, “in all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:18). Oft times the best way for overcoming a temptation to make a wrathful reply, is to quietly turn away from those who have angered us.

“And came and told him all those sayings” (1Sa 25:9). Here we are shown how the servants of Christ are to act when abused. Instead of indulging the spirit of revenge, they are to go and spread their case before their Master (Luk 14:21). It was thus the perfect Servant acted. Of Him, it is written, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1Pe 2:23). Oft times God brings us into trying situations to reveal unto us whether we are acknowledging Him in *all* our ways (Pro 3:6), or whether there is still a measure of self-sufficiency at work in our hearts—our response to the trial makes manifest which be the case.

And what was David’s response? How did *he* now react unto the disappointing tidings brought back by his men? Did he, as the *servant* of God, meekly bear Nabal’s taunts and cutting reproach? Did he cast his burden on the Lord, looking to Him for sustaining grace (Psa 55:22)? Alas, he acted in the energy of the flesh. “And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; And David also girded on his sword” (v. 13). David neither betook himself to prayer nor reflected upon the matter, but hurriedly prepared to avenge the insult he had received.



True, the ingratitude which Nabal had shown, and the provoking language he had used, were hard to endure—too hard for mere flesh and blood, for human nature ever wants to vindicate itself. His only recourse lay in God. To see *His* hand in the trial and to seek grace to bear it. But momentarily David forgot that he had committed his cause unto the Lord and took matters into his own hands. And why did God permit this breakdown? “That no flesh should glory in His presence” (1Co 1:29). “This must be the reason why suchlike episodes are found in the lives of all the Lord’s servants. They serve to demonstrate that these servants were not any better flesh than other men and that it was not more richly endowed brains that gave them faith of devotedness, but simply the *supernatural* power of the Holy Spirit” (C. H. Bright).

## ASSURANCE

### Dialogue 3

In the communicating of His Word, God was pleased to speak, “at sundry times and in divers manners” (Heb 1:1). In the Scriptures of truth, we have clear doctrinal instruction and plain precepts for the regulation of conduct, but we also find “dark parables” and mysterious symbols. Side by side is history and allegory, hymns of praise and practical proverbs, precious promises and intricate prophecies. Variety stamps all the works and ways of God. This illustrates a principle which should guide those whom the Lord has called to teach His Word—there should be variety both in the matter of their messages and the methods employed in delivering them. Many are unable to apprehend abstract statements, comparatively few have minds trained to follow a course of logical reasoning. The teacher then ought to adapt himself to the capacity of his hearers. Blessedly do we find this exemplified in the ministry of the perfect Teacher. The teaching of the Lord Jesus was largely by question and answer. Having this in mind, we feel it may be wise to follow the last two articles on “Assurance” by another one in dialogue form.

“Good evening, friend Humble Heart.”

“Good evening, Mr. Editor. This is a pleasant surprise, for I was not expecting to be favoured with a visit from one of God’s servants. I do not feel worthy of their notice.”

Editor: “According to my promise, I have been seeking to remember you before the throne of grace and while in prayer this morning there was impressed on my mind those words, ‘Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees’ (Heb 12:12). I have been impressed of late by that lovely prophetic picture of Christ found in Isaiah 40:11, ‘He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.’ The Savior devotes special care and tenderness upon the weak of the flock and in this He has left an example which the under-shepherds need to follow.”

Brother Humble Heart: “It is indeed kind of you, sir, to bestow any trouble upon such a poor, worthless creature as I am. I should have thought your time had been more profitably employed in ministering to those who *can* take in the truth quickly and who grow in it by leaps and bounds. As

for me, I am so dull and stupid, so full of doubtings and fears, that your labours on me are wasted.”

Editor: “Ah, my friend, all is not gold that glitters. The great majority of those who ‘take in the truth quickly’ only do so intellectually—it has no power over the heart and those who ‘grow by leaps and bounds,’ grow too swiftly for it to be real or worth anything spiritually. Truth has to be ‘bought’ (Pro 23:23), ‘bought’ by frequent meditation thereon, by taking it home unto ourselves, by deep exercises of conscience, by wrestling with God in prayer, that He would apply it in power to the soul.”

Brother H.H.: “Yes, I realize that, and it makes me feel so bad because God’s Word has not been written on *my* heart. I have gone over in my mind, again and again, all that you said at our last interview and I am sure that I am unregenerate.”

Editor: “What leads you to such a conclusion?”

Brother H.H.: “This, if I had been regenerated the Holy Spirit would be dwelling within me and in that case He would be producing His blessed fruit in my heart and life. It is written, ‘The fruit of the Spirit it is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance’ (self-control)—Galatians 5:22-23, and as I have endeavored to examine and search myself, I discover in me the very opposite of these heavenly graces.”

Editor: “God’s workings in grace and His ways in the material creation have much in common, and if we observe closely the latter, we may learn much about the former. Now in the natural realm, the production of fruit is often a slow process. Glance out now at the trees and how do they look? They are leafless and seem to be dead. Yet they are not. The vital sap is still in their roots, even though no signs of it be apparent to us. But in a little while, under the genial warmth of the sun, those trees will be covered with blossoms. Then, after a few days, those pretty blossoms will all have disappeared—blown off by the winds. Nevertheless, if those trees be examined closely it will be found that where those blossoms were are now little green buds. Many weeks have to pass before the owner of those trees is gladdened by seeing the buds develop into fruit.

“A further lesson may be learned from our gardens. The orchard teaches us the need for patience. The garden instructs us to expect and overcome disappointments. Here is a bed, which has been carefully prepared and sown with seed. Later, the seed springs up and the plants appear from which the flowers are to grow. But side by side there spring up many weeds too. The uninstructed gardener was not expecting this and is apt to be discouraged. Before he sowed the flower seed, he thought he had carefully rooted up every nettle, thistle, and obnoxious plant, but now the bed has in it more weeds than flowers. So it is, my brother, with the heart of the Christian. Though the incorruptible seed of God’s Word is planted there (1Pe 1:23), yet the heart—neglected all through the years of unregeneracy—is overgrown with weeds (the lusts of the flesh) and to the anointed eye the heart looks more like the devil’s weed plot than ‘the King’s garden’ (2Ki 25:4).”

Brother Humble Heart: “What you have just referred to in the natural realm is quite obvious, but I am not so clear about the spiritual application. Does not your last illustration belittle the work and power of the Holy Spirit? You have often quoted in your articles that Christ saves His people ‘from their sins’ (Mat 1:21), how then can any person rightfully regard himself as saved, while he is conscious that many sins have dominion over him?”

Editor: “I am glad you raised this point, for many dear souls are often troubled over it. Concerning the work and power of the Holy Spirit, light is thrown on this by various expressions which God has used in His Word. For example, in 2 Corinthians 1:22 (cf. Eph 1:13-14) we read

that God has ‘given *the earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts.’ Now an ‘earnest’ means a part, and not the whole—an installment, as it were. The fullness of the Spirit’s power and blessing is communicated to no Christian in this life. So again in Romans 8:23, ‘ourselves also, which have *the first fruits* of the Spirit’—a pledge, a sample only, of future greater abundance.

“Let me call your attention to the words which immediately follow those just quoted from Romans 8:23, namely, ‘even we ourselves groan within ourselves’ which is the more striking because this same thing is seen again in 2 Corinthians 5:4-5. So those who *are* indwelt by the Spirit of God are a ‘groaning’ people! It is true that the unregenerate ‘groan’ at times, when suffering great bodily pain or over some heavy loss, but the ‘groaning’ of the Christian is occasioned by something very different. He groans over the remains of depravity still left within him, over the flesh so often successfully resisting the Spirit, over seeing around him so much that is dishonouring to Christ. This is clear from Romans 7:24 and its context, Philippians 3:18, etc.”

Brother Humble Heart: “But only a few days ago I mentioned some of these very Scriptures to one whom I regard as an eminent saint and he told me that he had ‘got out of Romans 7 into Romans 8’ long ago.”

Editor: “But as we have seen, the Christian in Romans 8 ‘groans’ (v. 23)!”

Brother H.H.: “The one I had reference to laughed at me for my doubts and fears, told me I was dishonouring God by listening to the devil.”

Editor: “It is much to be feared that he is a complete stranger to those exercises of heart which are experienced by every regenerate soul and knows nothing of that heart-anguish and soul-travail which ever precedes *spiritual* assurance. The Lord Jesus did not laugh at fearing souls, but said, ‘Blessed are they that mourn.’ It is clear that your acquaintance does not understand your case.”

Brother H.H.: “But do you mean to say that all of God’s children are as wretched in soul as I am?”

Editor: “No, I would not say that. The Holy Spirit does not give the same degree of light on the exceeding sinfulness of sin to all alike, nor does He reveal so fully unto all their own inward depravity. Moreover, just as God has appointed different seasons to the year, so no true Christian is always the same in his soul. There are cheerful days of spring and gloomy days of autumn, both in the natural and in the spiritual. ‘But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day’ (Pro 4:18), nevertheless, ‘We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God’ (Act 14:22). Both are true, though we are not always conscious of them both.”

Brother H.H.: “I do not believe that any real Christian is ever plagued as I am. Plagued so often with a spirit of rebellion, with unbelief, with pride, with such vile thoughts and desires that I would blush to mention them.”

Editor: “Ah, my Brother, few unregenerate souls would be honest enough to acknowledge as much! The very fact that these inward workings of sin plague you is clear proof that you *are* regenerate, that there is within you a nature or principle of holiness which loathes all that is unholy. It is this which causes the Christian to ‘groan,’ nevertheless, this brings him into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. While here, the Lord Jesus was ‘the man of sorrows,’ and that which occasioned all His grief was sin—not His own, for He had none, but the sins of others. This then is one reason why God leaves the sinful nature in His people even after regeneration—that mourning over it, they may be conformed to their suffering Head.”

Brother H.H.: “But how does this tally with Christ’s saving His people from their sins?”

Editor: "Matthew 1:21 in nowise clashes with what I have been saying. Christ saves His people from the guilt and punishment of their sins, because that was transferred to and vicariously suffered by Him. He saves us too from the pollution of sin. His Spirit moves us to see, grieve over, confess our sins, and plead the precious blood, and as this is done in faith, the conscience is cleansed. He also saves us from the reigning power of sin, so that the Christian is no longer the absolute and abject slave of sin and Satan. Moreover, the ultimate fulfillment of this blessed promise (like that of many others) is yet future. The time is coming when the Lord Jesus shall rid His people of the very presence of sin, so that they shall be done with it forever."

Brother H.H.: "While on that point I wish you would explain to me those words 'sin shall not have dominion over you' (Rom 6:14)."

Editor: "Observe first what that verse does not say. It is not 'sin shall not haunt and harass you' or 'sin shall not trip you and occasion many a fall.' Had it said *that*, every Christian might well despair. To 'have dominion over' signifies the legal right to command another, such as a parent has over his child, or as one nation has over another which has been completely conquered in war. Such *legal* 'dominion' sin has not over any Christian: Christ alone is his rightful Lord. But sin oftentimes usurps authority over us, yet even experimentally it has not complete 'dominion': it can lead no Christian to apostatize, that is, utterly and finally renounce Christ. It can never so dominate the believer that he is thoroughly in love with sin and repents not when he offends."

Brother H.H.: "Thank you, but may I ask another question. Why is it that some of God's children are not plagued by sin as I am?"

Editor: "How can you be sure that they are not? 'The heart knoweth his own bitterness' (Pro 14:10.)"

Brother H.H.: "But I can tell from their peaceful countenances, their conversation, their joy in the Lord, that it cannot so be the case with them."

Editor: "Some are blest with a more cheerful natural disposition than others. Some keep shorter accounts with God, making it a point of conscience to confess every known sin to Him. Some are more diligent in using the means of grace. They who neglect the reading of God's Word, meditation thereon, and approach the throne of grace only occasionally and formally, cannot expect to have healthy souls."

Brother H.H.: "I admit I cannot meet your arguments. What you say is doubtless true of God's people, but my case is far worse than you realize. I have such a sink of iniquity within and so often find myself listless toward all that is spiritual, that I greatly fear there can be no assurance for me."

Editor: "It is the devil who tells you that."

Brother H.H.: "How can one distinguish between the harassing doubts which the devil injects and the convictions of sin and piercing of the conscience which the Holy Spirit produces?"

Editor: "*By the effects produced.* Satan will tell you that it is no use to resist indwelling sin any longer, that it is useless to pray any more. He seeks to produce despair and tells many harassed souls they might as well commit suicide and put an end to their misery. But when the Holy Spirit convicts a Christian, He also works in his heart a godly sorrow and moves him to acknowledge his transgressions to God. He leads to the throne of grace and gives again a sight of the cleansing blood of Christ, and this not once or twice, but to the end of our earthly lives. 'For a just man falleth seven times, *and riseth up again*' (Pro 24:16). If then this agrees with your own experience, you must be a Christian."

Brother H.H.: “I cannot but be struck with the fact that *your* counsel and instruction are the very opposite of what was given to me by the last person I spoke to about my sorrows. He is a man very wise in the Scriptures, having scores of passages at his finger’s end. He told me that the only way to get rid of my doubting was to believe the Word and that every time I felt miserable to lay hold of one of the promises.”

Editor: “I think I know the company to which that man belongs. All they believe in is a *natural* faith, which lies in the power of the creature, a faith which is merely the product of our own will-power. But *that* is not the ‘faith of God’s elect.’ Spiritual faith is the gift of God and only the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit can call it forth into action in any of us. Shun such a people, my brother. Avoid all who give no real place to the Holy Spirit, but would make you believe that the remedy lies in your own ‘free will.’ Seek more the company and communion of God Himself and beg Him for Christ’s sake to increase your faith and stay your mind upon Himself.”

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 2. The Purpose of God (Concluded)

Let us resume at the point where we closed the second section of this article, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). The attentive reader will at once note a change in the tense of the verb from that employed in the previous verses, which at once marks the division in thought or subject. In verse 3, it was “who hath blessed,” in verse 4, “hath chosen us,” verse 5, “having predestinated us,” and in verse 6, “hath made us accepted.” In each case the reference is to the decision or act of the Father in the everlasting covenant before the foundations of the world were laid. But in verse 7, it is “in whom we *have* redemption,” etc.—another set of blessings is there introduced, blessings which become the saints’ portion in a time-state and which are the means by which they reach the ultimate goal of eternal glory.

It would lead us too far afield to give here an exposition of Ephesians 1:7-9, so we must content ourselves with a bare outline. First, all the blessings which God’s elect enjoy now are based upon the “redemption” which they have in Christ. Second, three comprehensive blessings are named, “forgiveness of sins,” which is the negative side of justification. Then regeneration or the Spirit’s work of quickening (v. 8). The greatness of this blessing is signified by the “wherein he hath abounded toward us,” the nature of it—working in us “wisdom (cf. Psa 19:7; Pro 2:10; Eph 1:17) and prudence.” The cause being “the good pleasure of his will” (v. 9). Third, the making known of all that is said in verses 3-8, which is through the preaching of the Word. Now it is this last point which we must enlarge upon.

As the opening verse of the epistle to the Hebrews declares, it was not only at “sundry times” (in broken fragments, as it were), but in “divers manners” that God, in bygone ages, communicated to men a knowledge of His eternal counsels. Yet, though the “manners” were

diverse or varied, there was an unmistakable unity underlying them, as well as a noticeable progress in them. Central in all of them was the revelation of the covenant of grace, which, when understood in the most extensive sense, comprehends all the designs and transactions respecting the redemption of God's elect by Jesus Christ. The covenant of grace is in sharp contrast from the covenant (or "law") of works, under which man was first made. This covenant of grace (or everlasting covenant) is the foundation of all the favour which is shown unto the redeemed church throughout time and eternity.

Now the covenant of grace is made known in the Gospel, which "Gospel," as Galatians 3:8 tells us, was "preached to Abraham," and which Hebrews 4:2 declares was "preached unto" the nation of Israel. When that Gospel is truly and cordially embraced, there is a covenant transaction that takes place between God in Christ and every believer. This it is which is signified by *laying hold of* God's covenant (Isa 56:4, 6), and which was figured of old when men entered into a covenant with God. Then it is that God also enters into a covenant with us, for when the believing sinner heartily receives the Gospel, he has fulfilled the only condition required from him and is at once entitled to all the promises of the covenant and salvation is made sure to him, for one of the promises of the covenant, as proposed to men by God is, that he who once truly believes and accepts of the offer made to him in the Gospel, shall never fall from it, so as to fail to receive the blessings of it. It is in this respect, an everlasting covenant, as it ensures eternal life, can never fail or be broken by either party in covenant.

The terms of this covenant which God makes with His believing people are described in the following words, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer 32:40). This is the covenant of which David speaks, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for *this* is all my salvation, and *all* my desire" (2Sa 23:5). The tenor of this covenant of God is stated as follows, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb 8:10-12).

This covenant of grace is also called in Scripture a *new* or second covenant, in distinction from another and previous covenant. This is the covenant between the Triune God and Christ the Mediator. The first or old covenant was between God and the first Adam as representing all mankind (Hos 6:7 margin; Job 31:33), as the legal and public head. That between God and the last Adam, the Redeemer of the elect, their legal Representative and public Head, is a second and new one and it is this which lays the foundation of the covenant between God and believers. Absolutely speaking, the covenant between God and Christ is *not* a "new" one, for it was entered into long before Adam was created, but relatively, it is spoken of as "new" *as it was made known to men*, more fully, in contrast from the covenant of works, under which all mankind were antecedent to redemption by Christ, which covenant of works was brought into view and kept most in sight under the Mosaic economy or dispensation.

"The covenant made with the children of Israel was in the form of a covenant of works. The law of works was exhibited first and brought most clearly into sight, that it might be known to be what it really is. And the covenant of grace, or the Gospel, though revealed and contained in that covenant [with Israel] was not set in open light, but covered and in a measure hid under the types and shadows of that covenant, and under the form of a covenant of works, as the nucleus or kernel is covered and hid with the husk or shell that surrounds it. So that they who were not spiritual,

discerning, and attentive saw only the outside and considered it as wholly a covenant of works, and hoped for justification by it, in that view. It is certain this was the case with the nation of the Jews in general, in the apostles' days. They sought righteousness and justification, as it were, by the works of the law. They were ignorant of God's righteousness and attempted to establish their own righteousness, the righteousness of the law (Rom 9:32, 10:3).

"This form of a covenant of works is represented by *the veil* which Moses put over his face, when speaking to the people, So 'that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament [or the old covenant]; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart' (2 Co 3:13-15). In *this* view of it, and considered as exhibiting the covenant of works, St. Paul calls the giving of the law from Mount Sinai and that dispensation the ministration of death and condemnation, written and engraved in stones (2Co 3:7). It is therefore said, 'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (Joh 1:17). The dispensation under Moses was a legal dispensation, exhibiting law in the form of a covenant of works. One particular, and perhaps the principal design of it, was to reveal the divine law in strictness, extent, and glory of it, as necessary to prepare for the clear and open manifestation of the covenant of grace, which was then in a great measure hid and more obscurely revealed under types—so that the whole was but a *shadow* of the good things of the covenant of grace (Heb 10:1).

"Therefore the revelation made by Moses is called the *law*, and the covenant into which the children of Israel entered, is represented as a legal covenant, a covenant of works, to which the covenant of grace is opposed, as another and a new covenant. One quotation from Scripture, out of many that might be mentioned, will ascertain this, namely Hebrews 8:6-9. Therefore the Gospel is called the 'new testament,' and the Mosaic dispensation is called the 'old testament,' see 2 Corinthians 3:6, 14.

"The covenant of grace has been revealed to men and has been administered in different forms, and by various methods ever since the first intimation of mercy to sinners, made soon after the first human apostasy, and by it all true believers have been saved from that time to this—and none have been saved in any other way, nor will any be saved in any other way but this, to the end of the world, and in this respect it is an everlasting covenant...From Moses to the coming of Christ, the covenant of grace was made known and administered and the Gospel was preached to the children of Israel, through all that time, and all the pious were saved by it, though it was covered under the form of a covenant of works, as has been observed and explained.

"The law, as a covenant of works, was not exhibited in the revelation made to the children of Israel by Moses, as it has been now explained, under the notion that any man could obtain the favour of God, and be saved by this law or covenant, for this was impossible. But this law was thus revealed and *added*, that it might be known what the law was, and that men might be hereby convinced, that no man can be justified by the works of the law, as by his sins he is under the curse of it, and that under this conviction, and despairing of salvation by the covenant of works, they might be led to understand and embrace the covenant of grace, the way of salvation by faith in the Redeemer. This is the light in which this point is set by the apostle Paul, 'Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 'But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe' (Gal 3:21-22).

“This was the end which the revelation of this law answered, to those who were saved under that dispensation, and it is suited and designed to answer this same end to those who shall be saved, to the end of the world. For by the law thus revealed is the knowledge of sin and the curse of God, under which all men are, who do not believe in Christ. Thus St. Paul states the matter with regard to himself, ‘I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet... For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died’ (Rom 7:7-9). Though the Redeemer had not actually performed and gone through what He had undertaken to do and suffer, yet it being engaged and made certain, all believers who lived before His incarnation, were saved by virtue of His sufferings and obedience, which were certain to take place in due time.

“We trust the difference and opposition between the covenant of works and the new covenant, the covenant of grace, have been made clear above. The former requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, as the price to recommend to the favour of God, which is the righteousness of the law of works. The latter consists in a testimony and promise on God’s part, requiring nothing of man but that belief of this testimony and promise, which implies a cordial reception of the good things exhibited and offered in this covenant, without offering any thing as the price of them, but receiving them as a free gift to a sinner, infinitely guilty and wretched. The condition of the first is out of the reach of man. It is impossible he should obtain righteousness by it, because he is a sinner. The last is made effectual by the Spirit to all of God’s elect, saving every one that believeth.

“The apostle Paul states the difference and opposition between these two covenants from the writing of Moses, which proves that *both* these covenants *were revealed* in that dispensation. His words are these, ‘Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them (See Lev 18:5). But the righteousness *which is of faith* speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: (See Deu 30:11-14) that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved’ (Rom 10:5-9).

“In the preaching of the Gospel, the covenant of grace is proposed and the blessings it contains are offered to all to whom it comes, upon their believing and heartily approving the way of salvation therein proposed. For all who thus comply, come up to the condition of the covenant on their part and consequently are interested in all the promises of it” (Samuel Hopkins, 1721-1803). Christ and His benefits are offered to all who hear the Gospel. The Lord Jesus says, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him” (Joh 12:48), and none can *reject* Him to whom He is never “offered.”

The lengthy quotation which we have made above, from one who was contemporaneous with and an intimate friend of the celebrated Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), contains one of the most lucid and illuminating treatments of that aspect of the theme we are dealing with which we have ever come across in all our readings. We earnestly commend it to the best attention of interested readers. It throws a flood of light upon the Mosaic economy. It shows how that under the dispensation of the Old Testament, the Everlasting covenant was being administered and its blessings bestowed. It calls attention to the fact that the (seemingly incompatible elements of) Law and the Gospel were being proclaimed at one and the same time, that the claims of God were being pressed and the grace of God manifested during the same period.



From what has been brought out above, it should be plain that preaching the Gospel implies and entails a declaration of the whole system of truth and duty contained in the Scripture. Though some truths are more essential and important than others, and though the Gospel may truly be preached while some are overlooked, yet it cannot be *fully* preached unless the whole of divine revelation is brought into view, and therefore must be in a degree defective. Therefore, to preach the Gospel is to do as Paul did and “declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Act 20:27). Every doctrine revealed in the Word, and every duty prescribed, has a connection with the whole and all make but one consistent system.

Finally, what has been said above should make it clear that the preaching of the covenant of grace (the Gospel) *does not* annul the Law of God, nor discharge men from duty and obedience, but requires and demands obedience of all to whom it is preached. The Law is not in the least abolished in the extent and strictness of its precepts by the Gospel. Christ’s deliverance of His people from the curse of the Law, no more lessens their obligations to obey the Law perfectly, than His healing of the impotent man rendered it needless for Him to say, “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (Joh 5:14). No, the Law remains as much the measure and rule of duty to the Christian, as ever it was, and he is no further holy than he is conformed to the Law, loving God with all his heart, mind, and strength and his neighbour as himself. Thus the preaching of the Gospel does not make void the Law, but establishes it (Rom 3:31).

## WAITING AT WISDOM’S GATES

“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors” (Pro 8:34). In the Scriptures of truth, no more than two classes of people are declared to be in the world. The one class is called, “the blessed of the Lord,” and the other, “the cursed of the Lord,” or “the people of God’s curse.” This latter class contains all the “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” (Rom 9:22) all “the generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness,” (Pro 30:12) all the “generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell.” In short, all “whose names are not written in the Lamb’s book of life,” (Rev 13:8) who are not among those whom Jesus has “redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9). The former class, to which the characters spoken of in the text belong, contains all who are “chosen by God the Father in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love,” all whom He “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:3-7), all whom the Lord the Spirit quickens into spiritual and eternal life (Eph 2:1), and all to whom JEHOVAH says, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3). Of both these classes, or of the characters which make up these two distinct families, the Holy Spirit has given in His Word plain and striking descriptions. He has drawn their likenesses with His divine and unerring hand, and

has clearly separated the sheep from the goats, the chaff from the wheat (Mat 3:12), and “the precious from the vile” (Jer 15:19).

In the text, we have exhibited to us the portrait of a blessed character, an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ. His features are drawn from the life by the Spirit of life with the pencil of divine truth, and happy are we if we can trace any of these features in the fleshy tables of our hearts and discover any conformity to the image of Jesus in our souls. May it be our happiness to feel that we are of the “blessed of the Lord,” while attending to the description of the blessed man of whom wisdom speaks. May “the light of life” (Joh 8:12) shine upon the Word and shine into our hearts, that although we may only see through a glass darkly, we may be enabled to hear the still small voice of the Lord saying to our souls, “Unto you is the word [and power] of this salvation sent.”

“Blessed is the man that heareth *me*, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors” (Pro 8:34). I. The first thing to be attended to, in endeavoring to enter into these words, is to understand *who is the speaker*. By the context we find that it is one whose name is “Wisdom,” one who is holy, omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal; one who was “before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col 1:17); who, from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, was with the LORD, as one brought up by Him; who was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth, and having His delights with, or His affections set upon the sons of men. (Pro 8:23, 30-31) In short, the speaker in my text is clearly the same with Him of whom it is written, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). “Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks” (1Co 1:24). Now this divine, almighty, and all-wise Person is the promised Prophet of whom Moses wrote—Jehovah the Redeemer, who teaches those whom He calls to profit and leads them in the way wherein they should go. He is here exhibited to us as a wise and affectionate mother, in which character He was well known to His people (Isa 49:15; 66:13), giving instruction to her children and encouraging them to patient continuance in well-doing. I shall therefore, throughout this discourse, use the personal pronoun feminine, when referring to Immanuel Jesus, who says to all the elect family, “Hearken unto me, ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways, Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors” (Pro 8:32-34).

By none but those who esteem themselves to be “fools” and “simple ones” is the teaching of Wisdom really valued. The wise and prudent of this world, the self-sufficient Pharisees, the unhumiliated professor of the Gospel, agree in despising and counting it as a thing of nought. But Wisdom makes all her blessed children to know and feel their great need of her divine instruction. She causes them to hear her voice and to turn at her reproof. She pours out her Spirit unto them and makes known to them her words (Pro 1:23). The entrance (or opening) of which giveth light and understanding to the simple (Psa 119:130). But does Wisdom speak with an audible voice? Can the ears of the body catch the sound and the natural understanding comprehend her words? No! Wisdom’s voice is audible only to the new creature, which hears it in the impressions that she makes upon the heart and in the mysterious leadings of her providence. It is “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:10). “When thou saidest, Seek ye my face; *my heart said* unto thee, thy face, LORD, will I seek” (Psa 27:8). But when may a man be said to have heard the voice of Wisdom? When does he give evidence of having received her divine impressions, her heavenly and powerful operations,

through the Spirit, in his heart? When a man is made to feel that he is in the hand of the holy, just, and sin-avenging JEHOVAH, against whom he has sinned; when his transgressions and iniquities are set before him in the light of God's countenance; when he feels himself to be justly condemned (by the law which he has broken) to the second death, and to the endurance of the wrath of God for ever and ever.

When the depravity, deceitfulness, and desperate wickedness of his heart is discovered to him, and he is left to cry in the bitterness of his soul, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa 6:5). When, like the leper, he covers his lip, and goes forth crying, "Unclean, unclean," and putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be, there may be hope. When like Hezekiah, he turns his face to the wall and weeps sore in secret before the Lord. When a sense of his darkness, ignorance, impotency, and unprofitableness, makes him cry, "O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me" (Isa 38:14). When he finds all human cisterns to be broken and that vain is the help of man. When he feels that he is shut up and cannot come forth. When a strong conviction of the ability of Jesus to save and heal him is in his heart, and he cries unto Him to deliver him from going down to the pit. When nothing short of the Lord the Spirit's application of the love, blood, and righteousness of Jesus to his heart and conscience will satisfy him, and the spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon him, enabling him to pour out his soul before God, to acknowledge the iniquity of his transgression, to sue for mercy, to beg for pardon, teaching, wisdom, light, and power, and to crave for one smile, one look of love, one word from Christ's lips, more than for his necessary food. I say, when he has experienced these things, he has heard more than the voice of natural conscience, more than the word of man, more than the letter of the oracles of truth. He has heard the voice of the Lord, which is powerful and full of majesty, that breaketh the cedars in Lebanon, and maketh the hinds to calve. As one who was dead and in his grave, he has heard the voice of the Son of God and has been quickened by Him (Joh 5:25). He has heard the words of Wisdom. Her voice has sounded in his soul and has produced this wonderful change, and to him these words now apply, "The ear that heareth the reproof of life [wisdom] shall abide among the wise" (Pro 15:31). Happy, saith Wisdom, is the man that is in such a state, yea, "Blessed is the man that heareth me" (Pro 8:34).

Again. When he that hath climbed in over the wall, that has taken up a profession of religion without feeling its power, whose religion has hitherto been "feeding upon ashes," (Isa 44:20) and who has never known the strait gate and narrow way, is awakened by the solemn feeling that that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that except a man be born from above, he cannot see or enter into the kingdom of God (Joh 3:3,6); when the sluggard awakens from his slumber and the man that was asleep upon the top of the mast has his eyes opened to see his danger, and his heart and mouth opened to implore assistance, when the Spirit JEHOVAH has blown upon the breast, and all its glory withers away; when natural knowledge of divine truth, formal prayer, mock spirituality, feigned love, and presumptuous confidence become a heap and desperate sorrow; when examining himself whether he be in the faith, and trying himself by the test of God's Word, his faith is found to stand not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of man, his hope to be a false one, his love only fleshly and excited feelings, his zeal a spark from the fire of his own kindling, his wisdom folly; when he sees Tekel written upon his forehead and he trembles lest he should be lost after all his profession; when he cannot find that God has begun a good work in him, and yet lifts up his voice and entreats the Lord to have mercy upon him, and lead him in the way everlasting; when his spirit is broken with grief and sorrow, his strength has failed him and is gone, his beauty is turned into corruption, his

sweet smell becomes a stink, and his girdle a rent; when, under these feelings, he is constrained to sit alone and keep silence, to separate from those he once walked with, and to esteem those to be the excellent of the earth that he once despised; when he feels the vanity of all teaching but divine teaching, the folly of all wisdom which comes not from “the Spirit of wisdom,” and the abomination of all religion that is not planted in the heart by God’s own hand; when he besieges the throne of grace with fervent petitions that he may not go on deceiving and being deceived, but that he may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent; that he may have godly sorrow bestowed upon him, to work in his soul repentance not to be repented of; and that he may have the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, put into his heart, with faith, hope, and love, a tender conscience, godly sincerity, truth, uprightness, meekness, and humility, *then* he may be said to have heard the still small voice of Wisdom, to have heard her rod, and who hath appointed it. He has then the features of a “blessed” man, “Blessed is the man that heareth me” (Pro 8:34).

But there are other ways in which the blessed man hears the voice of Wisdom. “My people,” saith the Lord, “are bent to backsliding” (Hos 11:7). And there is no blessed man who is not sensible of the truth of this declaration. Wisdom speaks to her backsliding children and makes them know that they have committed two evils—in forsaking her, the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Thus, when he who has backslidden in heart from Wisdom’s ways, who has got entangled in the snares of his sinful heart, the world that lies in wickedness and the father of lies, when he who has “mingled himself among the people,” and has become as “a cake not turned,” (Hos 7:8). unsavory to the world and burdensome to the church, lukewarm, carnal, and careless, when he to whom neither heavenly things nor earthly things afford satisfaction, when he who has not heart for the former, and is condemned and unhappy in the latter, when (I say) such a one begins to feel the error of his way, to bemoan himself, to look upwards, and confess his sin to the Lord, to loathe himself and to cry, “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned,” (Jer 31:18) to long for the snare in which he is held to be broken, to be enabled once more to feel the Lord to be nigh, to be permitted to draw near unto Him without alarm, weariness, or aversion, to walk in His ways, to rejoice in His smiles, and to tremble at His frowns, to delight himself in God, to seek His glory, when he “accepts the punishment of his iniquity,” “smarts under his wounds,” groans under his hardness, roars like a bear, and mourns sore like a dove, when he is brought to lie in the dust, covered with shame, and is sometimes a little cheered by a word of encouragement for a moment resting upon his drooping spirit, producing softness, contrition, self-abasement, and greater desire to be permitted to touch the hem of Wisdom’s garment, when his conscience no longer lets him do violence to it without striking “a dart through his liver,” and every backward step adds “grief to his sorrow,” when he is constrained to attend to and to obey the commands that are laid upon his heart, although it mortifies his pride and debases him in the sight of man so to do, when, though his prayer seems to be shut out from the Lord, and a cloud is upon the throne of grace, he yet calls, cries, and shouts, nor can give Wisdom any rest until she hears and answers, *then* he hears her voice and Wisdom, sooner or later, makes him feel that “blessed is the man that heareth” (Pro 8:34) her.

Thus, then, Wisdom’s voice is heard in conviction of sin, in the breaking down and rooting up of false religion, and in the convincing of the backslider that his ways are crooked and bitter. But has she no voice to declare where are her footsteps in providence and her ways in love, mercy, grace, and faithfulness? Has this gentle, affectionate, and wise mother no kind words for her children, no promises, no consolations for her burdened and mourning family? She has. She does not use the rod alone. She does not only wound, kill, and bring down. She has words of healing,

words of restoring, words of deliverance, words of gracious instruction, of tender faithfulness. In providential trials, she often causes her blessed children to feel and confess that there was a needs-be for the affliction. She calls them to her feet, to make known their wants, and puts words into their hearts that they may plead with her and prevail. The blessed Spirit enlightens their eyes to see her smiles in the parting of the clouds and sometimes to discern her good will where, to reason, there is no trace of it. Many have found, and still find, that seasons of temporal calamity are made by Wisdom, the way of entrance to her chambers and the way of approach to her bosom. Greater nearness to her, more dependence upon her almighty arm, more confidence in her mercy and goodness, a deeper sense of her power to deliver, and of the fullness of her blessed words are more frequently found in adversity than were felt in prosperity. Something secret, but strong, keeps the blessed man looking to his gentle mother for help and protection, something causes him to take shelter under her outspread wings, and although unbelief would sink him with despondency, something is communicated to him which holds him up, and constrains him to say, "I will trust Thee, though Thou slay me" (Job 13:15). He believes that he will be extricated from his difficulty, but how he cannot tell. He feels that he cannot fall, but he sees not how he can stand. He believes that assistance will be afforded, but he cannot guess from what quarter it will come. Here he often hangs, like a balance blown upon by the winds. Sometimes the scale of faith and hope is the more weighty and sometimes that of fear and doubt. And thus he is kept, till Wisdom suddenly comes to her temple, and causes her voice to be heard in the deliverance which she brings.

Wisdom can speak by an angel, by the ravens and brook, by a prophet, by fire from heaven, by preserving her children unhurt in the flames, by shutting the mouths of the lions, by slaying Goliath by the hand of a stripling, armed with a sling and a stone, by multiplying the loaves and fishes, by restoring the sick child to health, by opening the eyes of the blind, making the lame man to leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. Wisdom never wants for means, nor can any deafness prevent her voice from being heard when she deigns to speak. Sweet is her voice to those who hear it. Powerful is her arm unto those in whose behalf it is revealed. Loving is her heart to those that lie near her bosom, and full of consolation are her breasts to those whom she causes to seek and be satisfied therewith. Wisdom's voice, then, drives fear away and brings comfort and thankfulness in providential things—and does it not effect the same in spiritual concerns? Yes, here too she speaks. Here is she heard. When bowed down under an accumulation of guilt, sin, and misery, and the soul is faint within, because Wisdom has so long kept silence, and has seemed inattentive to the groaning and sighing of the prisoner, when fears of destruction are many, and the cable is strained to the utmost, and seems just ready to snap and sever the vessel from the anchor by which it is held, then does Wisdom speak, then her "fear not" is heard. Then does she sprinkle her peace-speaking blood upon the guilty conscience or give power to the faint, to lay hold upon some merciful declaration, gracious invitation, or cheering promise. She speaks away all the guilt and fills the soul with peace and joy in believing, or helps it with a little help, and strengthens it with a little strength, as she sees good. To some she speaks with more and to some with less power. Some hear her voice of love and mercy frequently and clearly, and some rarely and faintly. But *all* her children *do* hear her voice, and experience, in measure and degree, the blessedness of her words to the weary, heavy-laden, destitute, guilty, and forlorn. Some hear it on their knees and some when walking by the way and conversing or meditating on the things pertaining to salvation. Some hear it under the preached Word and some in reading the Word. Some hear it in a text applied verbatim and some in the substance of a text gradually distilling its dew upon the soul. But in whatever degree or in whatever way Wisdom's voice is heard, the like effects are produced, the like spices flow out. Sensible relief, grace, mercy, and goodness are felt,

which lead the soul to repentance. Brokenness of heart, humility, and abasement of self are found. The sinner is brought low and the Savior is exalted. The creature lies in the dust and the Creator fills the throne. Unbelief is silenced and faith is heard. Pride is stained and a meek and lowly spirit is put on. Fear and torment are cast out and love is shed abroad in the heart. Christ is all and in all and the creature is nothing in nothing. O blessed is the man that hears this voice, that is come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, for says Wisdom, “Blessed is the man that heareth me” (Pro 8:34). None but the blessed long to hear this voice. They alone hear Wisdom speaking, in reproofs and pardon, in chastisement and mercy, in darkness and in light, in sorrow and in consolation, in warnings and in promises, in death and in life.

*(Completed in the next issue).*

## DELIVERANCE FROM PRISON

*“Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name”* (Psa 142:7). It is not certain that David composed this Psalm in the Cave of Adullam, when he had fled from Achish king of Gath, or in the cave of Engedi, when he had taken refuge from the wrath of Saul (1Sa 22:1-2 and 24:1-3). But this is a matter of very little consequence to us, as it is the state of his soul we want to come at, in order to render the subject profitable to the Lord’s tempted, tried, and harassed people, whose souls are often in such a state of captivity as obliges them to cry with the Psalmist, *“Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name”* (Psa 142:7). Let us, then, notice the threefold state of imprisonment of a spiritual nature which the Scriptures speak of and with which all God’s elected, redeemed, and regenerated people are, more or less, acquainted.

First, our attention is directed to that condition of thralldom we are all in by nature, namely, *“the pit wherein is no water”* (Zec 9:11), under sin’s dark dominion (Rom 3:9), under the law and subject to its curse. As the apostle observes, *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”* (Gal 3:10). And, *“What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”* (Rom 3:19). Thus men are shut up under the law, in unbelief, led captive by the devil at his will, are wholly under the power and dominion of sin and Satan, for he is the strong man armed, that has the possession of the heart, and keepeth his house in peace. And yet men fancy they are at liberty or if bound at all, that it is so slightly, they can at any time break their chains, open the prison doors, and let themselves out. Awful delusion! But the child of God made sensible of his imprisoned state, does not think and speak thus, but with the Psalmist, he confesses his bondage, sighs and groans under it, and cries unto the Lord, who alone can set his soul at liberty and redeem his life from destruction.

We now come to notice the *second* state of imprisonment, which is, the condition of soul of a sinner, made sensible of his undone, wretched, and miserable state, arising from the law having come with power to his heart in the hand of its divine author by which he has knowledge of sin

and the wrath and curse of God due to him as a vile offender. His soul, which was previously dead in sins and lay unconsciously imprisoned, is now quickened by the eternal Spirit and feels sin a burden. The hand of God lies upon him, pressing him sore. He is shut up under the law and cannot come forth, has no soundness in his flesh, because of a sense of God's anger. Neither is there any rest in his bones, because of his iniquities, for they are gone over his head as a heavy burden, too heavy for him to bear. He is troubled and bowed down greatly, seeing others walk at large, and mourning his own lonely state, longs for deliverance. But he can no more come out of this low dungeon, this horrible pit, this mire and clay, of himself, by his own strength or exertions, than he can create a world, and the more he struggles to break off his chains and open the prison doors, and come out by his legal works, the more he gets entangled and the deeper he sinks in the pit, for he finds that the law demands perfect and perpetual obedience, is inflexible, and will not abate the least mite. Therefore, the Lord alone can bring a soul out of prison and set it at liberty. Hence we read that "God setteth the solitary in families: He bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwelleth in a dry land" (Psa 68:6).

This is alone of His free favour, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, by means of the Gospel of His grace, which "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16). And the man who has thus been imprisoned and delivered, knows when, by whom, and by what means he was brought out. He knows that it is owing to the love of God the Father, as the *moving* cause, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sinner's Surety, in His obedience, death, and resurrection, as the *procuring* cause—by whose doing and dying the law is magnified and made honourable and the justice of God completely satisfied. Therefore the poor prisoner is sent out of the pit wherein is no water, by virtue of the blood of the covenant. The lawful captive is delivered and the prey taken from the terrible one. He is ransomed from hell and delivered from going down into the pit of endless misery. He knows, too, that it is owing to the power and grace of God the Spirit as the *efficient* cause, who has shed abroad the love of God in his heart, brought near the blood, righteousness, and salvation of Christ, and testified of the validity and efficacy of His blood to pardon, His righteousness to justify, and of His power to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, having wrought faith in his heart to look to and confide in the merits of Christ. Nor can he ever forget the mercy of God to him, a lost and helpless sinner, who was just ready to perish, when the great trumpet of love, pardon, and salvation was blown in his heart by the almighty Spirit, and his soul set at sweet and happy liberty thereby from the yoke of bondage, freed from Satan's heavy chain, and brought out of the prison house into the glorious liberty of the children of God, to hold converse and communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ by an unction from the Holy One.

Such distinguishing goodness and mercy, known and felt in the soul, are sure to produce gratitude, praise, and thanksgiving unto the Eternal Three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And in this consists the very essence of religion. For if we know nothing of bondage, we know nothing of spiritual liberty, if we have never felt our imprisoned state, we never knew what it was to be brought out of prison. Some, however, talk of the great joy they feel, but we never hear of the sorrow that they have had—of great liberty, but nothing do we hear of their imprisonment. They begin at the wrong end at first, who talk about their liberty before experiencing bondage—of the joy of God's salvation before their sorrow, from a sense of condemnation—of the pleasures of heaven before they have felt the pains of hell. But here, lest any should be wounded whom God would not have wounded, we would observe that there are different degrees of imprisonment. While we maintain that all God's children know what it is to be in prison of soul, yet all are not alike in prison, some being more closely confined, feeling greater darkness and horror, and being

more roughly treated, as it were. While others experience milder treatment and are not so long confined. Because some are three months in prison, it does not follow that all should lie there so long. Or that because the chain of some is peculiarly heavy, and their dungeon exceedingly dark and dismal, that the chain of all should be equally galling and their misery alike great. For as the poet expresses,

*Some souls are fifty pieces deep,  
and some five hundred owe.*

But as the Savior saith, “And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both” (Luk 7:41-42). God is a Sovereign and has a right to do as He pleases in this matter, either to doom a sinner in sorrows sharp and long to lay, or speedily turn his gloomy night into bright sunshine—as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, who was three days in the prison of soul distress before the Lord brought him out into liberty. While those who were converted unto God on the day of Pentecost were not so long as that in soul distress, for we read, “*Then* they that *gladly* received his word were baptized: and the *same day* there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Act 2:41). And the Philippian jailer was not so long detained as this, before his captivity was turned, for we read that “He took them [Paul and Silas] the *same hour* of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. . .and *rejoiced*, believing in God with all his house” (Act 16:33-34). But whether the time of a sinner’s imprisonment be long or short, we know that it is according to the appointment of God. And when He sets the souls of His people at liberty and continues to smile upon them, they have sweet peace of mind, “rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh” (Phi 3:3) But when He hides His face, then they are cast down again, as the Psalmist says, “Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down” (Psa 102:10).

This leads us to notice, more particularly, the *third* state of imprisonment, which happens when the soul that has been made clean and brought out of prison into liberty, returns again into darkness of mind, despondency and dejection—having no access to God in prayer, no sensible enjoyment of His presence, no communion with his heavenly Father, either in private supplication and reading of the Word, or in public ordinances, but he is shut up. The Word is a sealed book, yielding no consolation, but condemnation, and when he goes to the house of God, it is the same. While others are blessed under the Word preached, feeling its power and sweetness and are praising God, he is cast down, goes mourning without the sun, feels nothing but the vile affections of his deceitful heart and is fretful and rebellious when he hears others speak of the goodness of the Lord to them. Thus, as a prison is a place of confinement, he finds his soul “shut up and *cannot* come forth.” For a soul in this state requires the same power that brought him out of his first imprisonment, to bring him out of this low dungeon.

And as a prison is a place of darkness, so he walks in darkness and has no light, is solitary, sighs and groans, and concludes that the mercy of God is gone forever. But now and then hope springs up and he prays, with some degree of confidence, “Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name,” (Psa 142:7). and God will hear his prayer. Although this imprisonment be long, and occasioned by his own folly in departing from “the fountain of living waters,” and hewing out to himself “cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,” (Jer 2:13) for the Lord has said, that if His children forsake His law, He will “visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail” (Psa 89:32-33). He “heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners” (Psa 69: 33). He “looked down from the height of his sanctuary... to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death... He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not



despise their prayer” (Psa 102:17-20). And the covenant promise of God the Father to Jesus Christ the Son, runs thus, “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house” (Isa 42:6-7). And Christ saith, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord...hath sent me...to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Luk 4:18; Isa 61:1).

Now the Lord must come to the prisoner and set him free, and not wait till he has let himself out of prison, and then come and assist him. O no, JEHOVAH Himself must do the deed, for the poor prisoner can only groan, sigh, and pray for deliverance, but cannot effect it. If David could have obtained liberty by his own exertions, why does he pray, “*Bring* my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name” (Psa 142:7)? Observe the object of the poor prisoner in prayer to be brought out of prison. It is not merely ease and comfort to himself, but the glory of God, “that I may praise thy name.” Thus, praise to the name of the Lord is the consequence of His delivering mercy to our souls. Praise to sovereign love, atoning blood, and almighty power, combined together, in bringing a soul out of prison. (From the *Gospel Standard*, 1838).

# June

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 6. The Holy Spirit during Old Testament Ages

Much ignorance prevails today concerning this aspect of our subject. The crudest ideas are now entertained as to the relation between the Third Person of the Godhead and the Old Testaments saints. Yet this is scarcely to be wondered at in view of the fearful confusion which obtains respecting their salvation, many supposing that they were saved in an entirely different way from what we now are. Nor need we be surprised at that, for this, in turn, is only another of the evil effects produced by the misguided efforts of those who have been so eager to draw as many contrasts as possible between the present dispensation and those which preceded it, to the disparaging of the earlier members of God's family. The Old Testament saints had far more in common with the New Testament saints than is generally supposed.

A verse which has been grossly perverted by many of our moderns is John 7:39, "The Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." It seems passing strange that with the Old Testament in their hands, some men should place the construction which they do upon those words. The words "was not yet given" can no more be understood absolutely than "Enoch walked with God: and he was not" (Gen 5:24). They simply mean that the Spirit had not yet been given in His full administrative authority, He was not yet publicly manifested here on earth. All believers, in every age, had been sanctified and comforted by Him, but the "ministration of the Spirit" (2Co 3:8) was not at that time fully introduced. The outpouring of the Spirit, in the plenitude of His miraculous gifts, had not then taken place.

Let us first consider, though very briefly, the work of the Spirit in connection with the old or material creation. Before the worlds were framed by the Word of God and things which are seen were made out of things which do not appear (Heb 11:3), when the whole mass of inanimate matter lay in one undistinguished chaos, "without form, and void," we are told that, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2). There are other passages which ascribe the work of creation (in common with the Father and the Son) to His immediate agency. For example, we are told, "by his spirit he hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13). Job was moved to confess, "The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4). "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth" (Psa 104:30).

Let us next contemplate the Holy Spirit in relation to Adam. As so much darkness now surrounds this particular, we must enter into it more largely. “Three things were required to render man fit unto that life to God for which he was made. First, an ability to discern the mind and will of God with respect unto all the duty and obedience that God requires of him—as also for to know the nature and properties of God, as to believe Him the only proper object of all acts and duties of religious obedience, and an all-sufficient satisfaction and reward in this world and to eternity. Secondly, a free, uncontrolled, unentangled disposition to every duty of the law of His creation, in order unto living unto God. Thirdly, an ability of mind and will with a readiness of compliance in his affections, for a regular performance of all duties and abstinence from all sin. These things belonged unto the integrity of his nature, with the uprightness of the state and condition wherein he was made. And all these things were the peculiar effects of the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.

“Thus Adam may be said to have had the Spirit of God in his innocency. He had Him in these peculiar effects of His power and goodness, and he had Him according to the tenor of that covenant, whereby it was possible that he should utterly lose Him, as accordingly it came to pass. He had Him not by especial inhabitation, for the whole world was then the temple of God. In the covenant of grace, founded in the Person and on the meditation of Christ, it is otherwise. On whomsoever the Spirit of God is bestowed for the renovation of the image of God in him, He abides with him forever” (John Owen, 1680).

The three things mentioned above by that eminent Puritan constituted the principal part of that “image of God” wherein man was created by the Spirit. Proof of this is seen in the fact that at regeneration the Holy Spirit restores those abilities in the souls of God’s elect, “And have put on the new man, which is *renewed* in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:10). That is, the spiritual knowledge which man lost at the Fall is, potentially, restored at the new birth, but it could not be restored or “renewed” if man had never possessed it!

The “knowledge” with which the Holy Spirit endowed Adam was great indeed. Clear exemplification of this is seen in Genesis 2:19. Still more conclusive evidence is found in Genesis 2:21-23. God put Adam into a deep sleep, took a rib out of his side, formed it into a woman, and then set her before him. On sight of her Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” He knew *who* she was and her *origin*, and forthwith gave her a suitable name and he could only have known all this by the Spirit of revelation and understanding.

That Adam was originally made a partaker of the Holy Spirit is quite evident to the writer from Genesis 2:7, “The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and *breathed* into his nostrils the breath of *life*.” If those words be interpreted in light of the Analogy of Faith, they can mean nothing less than that the Triune God imparted the Holy Spirit unto the first man. In Ezekiel 37, we have a vivid parabolic picture of the regenerating of spiritual Israel. There we are told, “Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and *breathe* upon these slain, that they may *live*. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived” (Eze 37: 9-10). Again, we find the Savior, after His resurrection, “Breathed on them (the apostles), and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (Joh 20:22)—that was the counterpart of Genesis 2:7—the one, the original gift, the other, the restoration of what was lost.

Rightly has it been said that, “The doctrine that man was originally, though mutably, replenished with the Spirit, may be termed the deep fundamental thought of the Scripture doctrine of man. If the first and second Adam are so related that the first man was the analogue or figure of the second, as all admit on the authority of Scripture (Rom 5:12-14), it is clear that, unless the

first man possessed the Spirit, the last man, the Healer or Restorer of the forfeited inheritance, would not have been the medium of giving the Spirit, who was withdrawn on account of sin, and who could be restored only on account of the everlasting righteousness which Christ (Rom 8:10) brought in” (George Smeaton, 1880).

Let us next observe the relation of the Holy Spirit unto the nation of Israel. A very striking and comprehensive statement was made by Nehemiah, when he reviewed the Lord’s dealings with His people of old, “Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them” (Neh 9:20). He was, until quenched, upon the members of the Sanhedrin (Num 11:16-17). He came upon the judges (Jdg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 15:14). He came upon the kings (1Sa 11:6; 16:13), and the prophets. But note it is a great mistake to say, as many have done, that the Holy Spirit was never *in* any believer before Pentecost. Numbers 27:18, Nehemiah 9:30, 1 Peter 1:11 clearly prove otherwise. But alas, Israel “rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit” (Isa 63:10), as Stephen declared, “Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Act 7:51).

That the Holy Spirit indwelt saints under the legal economy is clear from many considerations. How otherwise could they have been regenerated, had faith been enabled to perform works acceptable to God? The Spirit prompted true prayer, inspired spiritual worship, produced His fruit in the lives of believers then as much as He does now (see Zec 4:6). We have “the *same* spirit of faith” (2Co 4:13) as they had. All the spiritual good which has ever been wrought in and through men must be ascribed unto the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was given to the Old Testament saints *prospectively*, as pardon of sin was given—in view of the satisfaction which Christ was to render unto God.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 66. The Faith of Abraham, Concluded (11:17-19)

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13). The Lord has an absolute claim upon us, upon all that we have. As our Maker and Sovereign, He has the right to demand from us anything He pleases and whatsoever He requires we must yield (1Ch 29:11). All that we have comes from Him and must be held for Him and at His disposal (1Ch 29:14). The Christian is under yet deeper obligations to part with anything God may ask from him. Loving gratitude for Christ and His so great salvation must loosen our hold on every cherished temporal thing. The bounty of God should encourage us to surrender freely whatever He calls for, for none ever lose by giving up anything to God. Yet powerful as are these considerations to any renewed mind, the fact remains that they move us not until *faith* is in exercise. Faith it is which causes us to yield to God, respond to His claims, and answer His calls.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received

him in a figure” (Heb 11:17-19). The apostle’s purpose in citing this remarkable incident was to show that it is the property of faith to carry its possessor through the greatest trials, with a cheerful submission and acceptable obedience to the will of God. In order to make this clearer unto the reader, let us endeavor to exhibit the powerful influence which faith has to support the soul under and carry it through testings and trials.

First, faith judgeth of all things aright. It impresses us with a sense of the uncertainty and fleetingness of earthly things and causes us to highly esteem invisible and heavenly things. Faith is a spiritual prudence opposed not only to ignorance, but also to folly. So much unbelief as we have, so much folly is ours, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe” (Luk 24:25). Faith is a spiritual wisdom, teaching us to value the favour of God, the smiles of His countenance, the comforts of heaven. It shows us that all outward things are nothing in comparison with inward peace and joy. Carnal reason prizes the concerns of the present life and grasps at its riches and honours. Sense is occupied with fleshly pleasures, but faith knows, “Thy lovingkindness is better than life” (Psa 63:3).

Second, faith solves all riddles and doubts when we are in a dilemma. What a problem confronted Abraham. What! shall I offer Isaac and bring to nought God’s promises or must I disobey Him on the other side? Faith removed the difficulty, “accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.” Faith believes the accomplishment of the promise, whatever reason and sense may say to the contrary. It cuts the knot by a resolute dependence upon the power and fidelity of God. Faith casts down carnal imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against God and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Third, faith is a grace which looks to future things and in the light of their reality, the hardest trials seem nothing. Sense is occupied only with things present and thus to nature it appears troublesome and bitter to deny ourselves. But the language of faith is, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; *while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2Co 4:17-18). Faith looks within the veil and so has a mighty influence to support the soul in time of trial. He who walks in the light of eternity goes calmly and happily along through the mists and fogs of time. Neither the frowns of men nor the blandishments of the world affect him, for he has a ravishing and affecting sight of the glorious inheritance to which he is journeying.

Fourth, “faith worketh by love” (Gal 5:6) and then nothing is too near and dear to us if the relinquishing of them will glorify God. Faith not only looks forward, but backward. It reminds the soul of what great things God has done for us in Christ. He has given us His beloved Son and *He* is worth infinitely more than all we can give to Him. Yes, faith apprehends the wondrous love of God in Christ and says, If He gave the Darling of His bosom to die for me, shall I stick at any little sacrifice? If God gave me Christ shall I deny Him my Isaac. I love him well, but I love God better.” Thus faith works, urging the soul with the love of God, that we may out of thankfulness to Him part with those comforts which He requires of us.

“Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Heb 11:18). This was brought in by the apostle to show wherein lay the greatest obstacle before Abraham’s faith. First, he was called on to “offer up” his son and heir. Second, and this after he had “received the promises.” Third, not Ishmael, but his “only begotten” or well-beloved Isaac. This is the force of the expression. It is a term of endearment as John 1:18 and 3:16 show. Fourth, he must slay the one from whom the Messiah Himself was to issue, for this is clearly the meaning of the divine promise recorded in verse 18.

Long ago, John Owen (1616-1683) called attention to the fact that the Socinians (Unitarians) reduced God's promise to Abraham unto two heads—first, that of a numerous posterity and second, that this posterity should inhabit and enjoy the land of Canaan as an inheritance. But this, as he pointed out, directly contradicts the apostle, who in Hebrews 11:39 affirms that, when they had possessed the land of Canaan almost unto the utmost period of its grant unto them, had *not* received the accomplishment of the promises. We wish our modern “dispensationalists” would ponder that verse. While it is true that the numerous posterity of Abraham and their occupancy of Canaan were both means and pledges of the fulfillment of the promise, yet Acts 2:38-39, and Galatians 3:16 make it unmistakably plain that the subject matter of the promise was Christ Himself, with the whole work of His mediation for the redemption and salvation of His church.

“Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Heb 11:18). This divine promise is first found in Genesis 21:12 and the occasion of God's giving it unto Abraham supplies us with another help towards determining its significance. In the context there, we find that the Lord had given orders for the casting out of Hagar and her son and we read, “And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son” (Gen 21:11). Then it was, to console his stricken heart, that JEHOVAH said unto His “friend,” “Grieve not over Hagar's son, for I will give thee one who is better than a million Ishmeals. I will give thee a son from whom shall descend none other than the promised Savior and Redeemer.” And now Abraham was called upon to slay him who was the marked-out progenitor of the Messiah! No ordinary faith was called for here!

Who can doubt but that now Abraham was sorely pressed by Satan! Would he not point out how “inconsistent” God was?—as he frequently will to us, if we are foolish enough to listen to his vile accusations. Would he not appeal to his sentiments and say, “How will Sarah regard you when she learns that you have killed and reduced to ashes the child of her old age?” Would he not seek to persuade Abraham that God was playing with him, that He did not really mean to be taken seriously, that He could not be so cruel as to require a righteous father to be the executioner of his own dutiful son? In the light of all that is revealed of our great enemy in Holy Writ, and in view of our own experience of his fiendish assaults, who can doubt but what Abraham now became the immediate object of the devil's attack.

Ah, nothing but a mind that was stayed upon the Lord could have then resisted the devil and performed a task which was so difficult and painful. “Had he been weak in faith, he would have doubted whether two revelations, apparently inconsistent, could come from the same God, or if they did, whether such a God ought to be trusted and obeyed. But being strong in faith, he reasoned in this way, This is plainly God's command, I have satisfactory evidence of that and therefore it ought to be immediately and implicitly obeyed. I know Him to be perfectly wise and righteous, and what He commands must be right. Obedience to this command does indeed seem to throw obstacles in the way of the fulfillment of a number of promises which God has made to me. I am quite sure that God has made those promises. I am quite sure that He will perform them. How He is to perform them, I cannot tell. That is His province, not mine. It is His to promise and mine to believe. His to command and mine to obey” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

The incident we are now considering shows us again that faith has to do not only with the promises of God, but with His precepts as well. Yea, this is the central thing which is here set before us. Abraham had been “strong in faith” when God had declared he should have a son by his aged wife (Rom 4:20), not being staggered by the seemingly insurmountable difficulty that stood in the way, and now he was strong in faith when God bade him slay his son, refusing to be deterred by the apparently immovable obstacle which his act would interpose before his receiving

the seed through Isaac. Ah, dear reader, make no mistake upon this point—a faith which is not as much and as truly engaged with the precepts, as it is with the promises of God, is not the faith of Abraham and therefore is not the faith of God’s elect. Spiritual faith does not pick and choose. It fears God as well as loves Him.

As the promises are not believed with a lively faith unless they draw off our hearts from the carnal vanities to seek that happiness which they offer us, so the commandments are not believed rightly unless we be fully resolved to acquiesce in them as the only rule to guide us in the obtaining that happiness, and to adhere to and obey them. The psalmist declared, “I have *believed* thy *commandments*” (Psa 119:66). He recognized God’s authority behind them, there was a readiness of heart to hear His voice in them, there was a determination of will for his actions to be regulated by them. So it was with Abraham and so it must be with us if we would furnish proof that *he* is *our* “father.” “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (Joh 8:39).

God’s Word is not to be taken piecemeal by us, but received into our hearts as a whole. Every part must affect us and stir up dispositions in us which each several part is suited to produce. If the promises stir up comfort and joy, the commandments must stir up love, fear, and obedience. The precepts are a part of divine revelation. The same Word which calls upon us to believe in Christ as an all-sufficient Savior, also bids us to believe the commandments of God, for the molding of our hearts and the guiding of our ways. There is a necessary connection between the precepts and the promises, for the latter cannot do us good until the former be heeded. Our consent to the law precedes our faith in the Gospel. God’s commands “are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3). Christ must be accepted as Lawgiver before He becomes our Redeemer, Isaiah 33:22.

How the readiness of Abraham to sacrifice his son condemns those who oppose God’s commands and will not sacrifice their wicked and filthy lusts! “Whosoever he be of you,” says Christ, “that *forsaketh not* all that he hath, he *cannot* be my disciple” (Luk 14:33). By which He meant, until he does in heart sincerity and resolute endeavor turn away from all that stands in competition (for our affections) with the Lord Jesus, he cannot become a Christian, see Isaiah 55:7. In vain do we claim to be saved if the world still rules our hearts. Divine grace not only delivers from the wrath to come, but even now it effectually “teaches” its recipients to *deny* all “ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Ti 2:12).

“Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb 11:19). Here we learn what was the immediate object of Abraham’s faith on this occasion, namely, the mighty power of God. He was fully assured that the Lord would work a miracle rather than fail of His promise. Ah, my brethren, it is by meditating upon God’s sufficiency that the heart is quieted and faith is established. In times of temptation when the soul is heavy with doubts and fears, great relief may be obtained by pondering the divine attributes, particularly, God’s omnipotency. His almighty power is a special prop to faith. The faith of saints has in all ages been much strengthened hereby. Thus it was with the three Hebrews, “Our God whom we serve *is able* to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace” (Dan 3:17)! “With God *all* things are possible” (Mar 10:27). He is able to make good His word, though all earth and hell seem to make against it.

Here too we see exhibited another of faith’s attributes, namely, the committal of events unto God. Carnal reason is unable to rest until a solution is in sight, until it can see a way out of its difficulties. But faith spreads the need before God, rolls the burden upon Him, and calmly leaves the solution to Him. “Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established” (Pro 16:3). When this is truly done by faith, we are eased of many tossings of mind and agitations

of soul that would otherwise distress us. So here, Abraham committed the event unto God, reckoning on His power to raise Isaac again, though he should be killed. This is the very nature of spiritual faith—to refer our case unto Him and wait calmly and expectantly for the promised deliverance, though we can neither perceive nor imagine the manner in which it shall be brought about. “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he *shall* bring to pass” (Psa 37:5).

O how little faith is in exercise among the professing people of God today. Occupied almost wholly with the rising tide of evil in the world, with the rapid spread of Romanism, with the apostasy of Protestantism, the vast majority of those now bearing the name of Christ conclude that we are facing a hopeless situation. Such people seem to be ignorant of the history of the past. Both in Old Testament times and at different periods of this dispensation, things have been far worse than they now are. Moreover, such trembling pessimists *leave out God*. Is not HE “able” to cope with the present situation? A hesitating “Yes” may be given, at once nullified by the query, “But where is the promise that He *will* do so?” Where? Why in Isaiah 59:19, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood [has he not already done so!], the Spirit of the LORD *shall* lift up a standard against him”—but who *believes* it?!

Ah, my Christian reader, ponder thoughtfully that blessed affirmation of Him that cannot lie and then bow the head in shame for thine *unbelief*. Everything in the world may seem to lie dead against the fulfillment of many a divine promise, yet no matter how dark and dreadful the outlook appears, the Church of God on earth today is not facing nearly so critical and desperate a situation as did the father of the faithful when he had his knife at the breast of him on whose one life the accomplishment of *all* the promises did depend. Yet he rested in the faithfulness and power of God to secure His own veracity and so may we do also at this present juncture. He who responded to the faith of sorely tried Abraham, to the faith of Moses when Israel stood before the Red Sea, to the three Hebrews when cast in Babylon’s furnace, *will* to ours, if we *really* trust Him. Forsake then your newspapers, brethren, get ye to your knees, and pray expectantly for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Man’s extremity is always God’s opportunity.

“Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb 11:19). This supplies an interesting sidelight on the spiritual intelligence of the patriarchs. The Old Testament saints were very far from being as ignorant as some of our superficial moderns suppose. Erroneous conclusions have often been drawn from the silence of Genesis on various matters. The later books of Scripture frequently supplement the concise accounts supplied in the earlier ones. Rightly did John Owen point out, “Abraham firmly believed, not only in the immortality of the souls of men, but also the resurrection from the dead. Had he not done so, he could not have betaken himself unto this relief in his distress. Other things he might have thought of, wherein God might have exercised His power, but he could not believe that He would do it, in that which itself was not believed by him.”

Some, perhaps, may think that Owen drew too much upon his imagination, that he read into Hebrews 11:19 what is not really there. If so, they are mistaken. There is one clear statement in Genesis 22, which, though not quoted by the eminent Puritan, fully establishes his assertion. There we are told that the patriarch said unto his young men, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, *and come again to you*” (Gen 22:5). This is exceedingly blessed. It shows us that Abraham was not occupied with his faith, his obedience, or with anything in himself, but solely with the living God. The “worship” of Him filled his heart and engaged all his thoughts. The added words, “and come again to you” make it unmistakably plain that Abraham confidently expected JEHOVAH to raise again from the dead the one he was about to sacrifice unto Him as a



burnt offering. A wonderful triumph of faith was this. Recorded for the praise of the glory of God's grace and for our instruction.

O my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, we want you to do something more than read through this article. We long for you to *meditate* upon this blessed sequel to Abraham's sore trial. He was tested as none other ever was and grand was the outcome, but between that testing and its happy issue there was the exercise of faith, the counting upon God to interpose on his behalf, the trusting in His all-sufficient power. And God did not fail him, though He tried his faith to the limit, yet in the nick of time the Lord intervened. This is recorded for our encouragement, especially for those who are now passing through a fiery furnace. He who can *deliver from death*, what cannot He do! Say then with one of old, "Neither is there any rock [to stay ourselves upon] like our God" (1Sa 2:2). Hannah had found a mighty support to her faith in the power of God.

"By faith Abraham...offered up Isaac...accounting that God was able to raise him up" (Heb 11:17-19). Faith, then, *expects* a recompense from God. Faith knows that it is a saving bargain to lose things for Christ's sake. Faith looks for a restitution of comforts again, either in kind or in value, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren...for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren...and in the world to come eternal life" (Mar 10:29-30)—that is, either actually so, or an abundant equivalent. When one of the kings of Israel was bidden by the Lord to dismiss the army he had hired, he was troubled and asked, "What shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel" (2Ch 25:9). Whereupon the prophet replied, "The LORD is able to give thee much more than this"! When a man, through faithfulness to Christ, is exposed unto the frowns of the world, and his family faces starvation, let him know that God *will* undertake for him. The Lord will be no man's debtor.

"From whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb 11:19). Abraham had, as to his purpose, sacrificed Isaac, so that he considered him as dead, and he (thus) received him back from the dead—not really, but in a manner bearing likeness to such a miracle. This illustrates and demonstrates the truth of what has just been said above. God returns again to us what we offer to Him, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7). "That which he hath given will he pay him again" (Pro 19:17), for He will not be beholden to any of His creatures. Hannah gave up Samuel to the Lord and she had many more children in return (1Sa 2:20-21). How great, then, is the folly of those who withhold from God anything which He asks of them. How they forsake their own mercies, stand in their own light, and hinder their own good.

"From whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb 11:19). Here is the grand outcome of the patriarch's faith. First, the trial was withdrawn, Isaac was spared. The speediest way to end a trial is to be completely resigned to it. If we would save our life, we must lose it. Second, he had the expressed approval of the Lord, "Now I know that thou fearest God" (Gen 22:12). He whose conscience is clear before God enjoys great peace. Third, he had a clearer view of Christ than he had before, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day," (Joh 8:56) said the Savior. The closer we keep to the path of obedience, the more real and precious will Christ be unto us. Fourth, he obtained a fuller revelation of God's name. He called Him, "Jehovah-Jireh" (Gen 22:14). The more we stand the test of trial, the better instructed shall we be in the things of God. Fifth, the covenant was confirmed to him (Gen 22:16-17). The quickest road to full assurance is full obedience.

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*Please continue in prayer for the circulation of "Studies."*

# THE LIFE OF DAVID

## 18. His Check from Abigail

In our last article, we saw how that God submitted David unto a testing of quite another character and from a different quarter than those he had previously been tried by. Hitherto, the thorn in his side had been none other than the king of Israel, to which we may add the callous indifference toward him of the nation at large. But now he was unexpectedly rebuffed by an individual farmer, from whom he had sought some victuals for his men. “His churlish soul, adding insult to injury, dismissed the messenger of David with contumely and scorn. It is a hard thing to endure. David had endured and was enduring much. He was suffering from the active enmity of Saul and from the dull apathy of Israel. But both were great, and so to speak, dignified enemies. Saul was Israel’s king and Israel were God’s people. It seemed comparatively honourable to be persecuted by *them*, but it was a far different thing to endure the reproach of one so despicable as Nabal. ‘Surely in vain,’ said David, ‘have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness’” (1Sa 25:21) (Benjamin W. Newton, 1620-1682).

What made the trial more poignant to David’s soul was the fact that he himself had acted honourably and kindly toward Nabal. When, on a previous occasion he had sojourned in those parts, he had not only restrained his own men from preying upon Nabal’s flocks, but had been a defense to them from the wandering bands of the Philistines. It was, then, the least that this wealthy sheep owner could do to now show his appreciation and make present of a little food to David’s men. Instead, he mocked them. Ingratitude is always trying to flesh and blood, but more so when it is coupled with gross injustice. Yet often God is pleased to try His people in this way, calling upon them to receive treatment which they feel is quite “uncalled for,” yea, positively “unjust.” And why does God permit this? For various reasons—among others, to furnish us opportunities to *act out what we profess!*

The reaction of David unto this trial is recorded for our learning, for us to lay to heart and turn into earnest prayer. “And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword” (1Sa 25:13). Well may we ask, Had he been so long in the school of affliction and not yet learned patience! “He forgot that all suffering, all reproach, that is *for God’s sake*, is equally honourable, whether it come from a monarch or from a churl. His proud spirit was roused, and he who had refused to lift up his hand against Saul and had never unsheathed his sword against Israel, he who was called to fight, not for his *own sake*, against his *own* enemies, but for *the Lord’s sake* against the *Lord’s* enemies, he—David, forgot his calling and swore that Nabal should expiate his offense in blood” (B. W. Newton)

And how are we to account for his lapse? Wherein, particularly, was it that David failed? In being unduly occupied with the second cause, the human instrument. His eyes were upon man,

rather than upon God. When his men returned with their disappointing tidings he ought to have said with Job, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10). Ah, it is easy for us to say what David *ought* to have said, but do we act any better when we are similarly tested? Alas, has not both writer and reader full reason to bow his head in shame! Far be it from us, who thoroughly deserve them ourselves, to throw stones at the beloved Psalmist. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has faithfully recorded his failures and the best way for us to profit from them is to trace them back to their source, and seek grace to avoid repeating them.

Above we asked the question, Had David been so long in the school of affliction and not yet learned patience? This leads us to inquire, *What is patience?* Negatively, it is meekly receiving *as from God* whatever enters our lives, a saying from the heart, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11). Positively, it is a persevering continuance in the path of duty, not being overcome by the difficulties of the way. Now to accept as from God whatever enters our lives requires us to cultivate the habit of seeing *His* hand in everything. Just so long as we are unduly occupied with secondary causes and subordinate agents, do we destroy our peace. There is only one real haven for the heart and that is to “rest in the Lord,” to recognize and realize that “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are *all* things” (Rom 11:36), ever seeking to learn His lesson in each separate incident.

It is blessed to know that “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD,” and that “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand” (Psa 37:23-24). Yes, and oftentimes though we trip, He keeps us from falling. Where it is the genuine desire of the heart to please the Lord in all things, He will not let us go far wrong. Where the will is sincerely bent Godwards, He will not suffer Satan to prevail. Thus it was here with David. To answer the fool (Nabal) according to his folly (Pro 26:4) was just what the devil desired and momentarily he had gained an advantage over him. But the eyes of the Lord were upon His tempted servant and graciously did He now move one to deter him from accomplishing his vindictive purpose. Let us admire His providential workings.

First, we are told that, “But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: They were a wall unto us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him” (1Sa 25:14-17). One of Nabal’s servants acquainted his mistress with what had transpired, confirming, be it noted, what was said by David’s men in verse 7. He probably drew the logical inference that David would avenge his insult, and anxious for his own safety as well as for the other members of the household and yet not daring to voice his fears unto Nabal, he informed Abigail.

How wondrously God makes all things “work together” for the good of His own. How perfect are His ways—fulfilling His own secret and invincible designs, yet leaving quite free the instruments who, unconsciously, fulfill them. The providential machinery to restrain the impetuous David was now set in motion. A servant of Nabal’s, moved by nothing higher than the instinct of self-preservation (so far as *his* consciousness went), warns his mistress of their impending danger. Now mark, secondly, her response. She did not laugh at the servant and tell him his fears were groundless, nor was she suddenly paralyzed by feminine fright at the alarming tidings. No, a hidden Hand calmed her heart and directed her mind. Accepting the warning, she

acted promptly, setting out at once with an elaborate present to placate the angry David—present that would meet the immediate needs of his hungry men, see verses 18-19.

There are some who have criticized this action of Abigail's, dwelling upon the last clause of verse 19, "But she told not her husband Nabal." Such a criticism is a very superficial conclusion. What Abigail did was necessary for the protection of the family. Perceiving that Nabal's stubbornness would ruin them all, the exigencies of the situation fully justified her conduct. It is true she owed allegiance to her husband, but her first and great duty was to take measures to protect their lives. Inferior interests must always be sacrificed to secure the greater—our property to preserve our lives, our very lives to preserve our souls. As we shall see, verses 24, 28 make it clear that she acted from no disloyalty to Nabal. Nevertheless, it is an extraordinary case which is here before us, and so *not* to be used as an example.

And what of David at this time? Was he recovered from his outburst of anger? No, indeed, or there had been no need for Abigail's mission of conciliation. The words of Nabal were still rankling within his heart. Hear him as he petulantly declares, "Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good" (v. 21). He repented of the kindness shown Nabal, feeling now that it had been wasted upon him, that he was devoid of gratitude and incapable of appreciating the good turn shown him. But God is "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil," and bids us, "Be ye therefore merciful" (Luk 6:35-36). Ah, to cultivate that attitude we must seek grace to *mortify* the spirit of pride which desires recognition and that bitterness which rises when we are slighted.

Not only was David chafing under the ingratitude and taunts of Nabal, but he was still bent on revenge, as verse 22 shows, he had determined to slay every male in Nabal's household. This was unjust and cruel in the extreme, and if God suffered him to carry out such a design, had greatly sullied his character, and given his enemies an immense advantage against him. So determined was he, that he confirmed his intention with an oath, which was rash and savored of profanity. See here, dear reader, what even the child of God is capable of when grace is not active within him. The realization of this ought to make us walk very softly, and work out our salvation with "fear and trembling." It is for this reason that God so often withdraws from us the power of His Spirit—that we may know what is yet in our hearts (2Ch 32:31), and be humbled before Him.

How blessedly God *times* His mercies. Here was David premeditating evil, yea, on the point of carrying out his wicked purpose. But there was one, sent by the Lord, already on the way to deliver him from himself. Ah, dear reader, have not you and I often been the recipient of similar favours from heaven? Were there not times, be they recalled to our deep shame, when *we* had determined upon a course dishonouring to our Lord, when, all praise unto Him, some one crossed our path and we were delayed, hindered, deterred. That some one may not have spoken to us as definitely as Abigail did unto David, rather perhaps *their* errand was of quite another nature, which at the time we may have resented as a nuisance for interrupting us. But now, as we look back, do we not see the kind hand of God withholding us from carrying out an evil purpose!

Apparently David was already on his way to execute his evil intention when Abigail met him (v. 20). Blessed is it to see the place which she now took, "When Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, And fell at his feet" (v. 23-24). This was not mere adulation and it was something more than an ordinary salutation. It was *faith's acknowledgment* of the "anointed of the Lord." Nabal had insulted him as a runaway slave, but his wife owns him as a superior, as her king in the purpose of God. Her address to him on this occasion (v. 24-31) is deserving of close study, but we can only offer a few brief remarks upon it.

It is to be carefully noted that Abigail did not upbraid David for cherishing the spirit of revenge and tell him that it ill-became his character and calling. It had not been seemly for *her* to do, rather did she leave it for his conscience to accuse him. She did not excuse her husband's conduct, nor did the present case allow her to hide his infirmity, but she sought to turn his well-known character for rashness and insolence (v. 25) into an argument with David, why he should lay aside his resentment. "She intimated that Nabal (whose name means 'folly') intended no peculiar affront to him, but only spoke to his usual way of treating those who applied to him, and it was beneath a person of David's reputation and eminence to notice the rudeness of such a man" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

Abigail's piety comes out clearly in verse 26. Possibly she perceived a change in David's countenance, or more probably she felt in her spirit that the object before her was now gained. But instead of attributing this unto her pleading, or the present she had brought, she ascribed it solely unto the restraining grace of God, "The LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand." Thus alone is God honoured and given His proper place, when we freely impute unto *His* working all that is good in and from our fellow creatures. Beautiful too is it to behold how she shields her churlish husband: "upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be" (v. 24), "I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid" (v. 28). She took upon herself the blame for the ill-treatment of his men and says, "If thou wilt be angry, be angry against *me*, rather than with my poor husband."

Next, we behold her strong faith "The LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house" (v. 28). She makes reference unto the future to draw his heart from the present. As another has said, "To the heir of a kingdom, a few sheep could have but little attraction and one who knew that he had the anointing oil of the Lord upon his head, might easily bear to be called a runaway servant." Ah, it is ever the office of faith to look beyond present circumstances and difficulties, on to the time of deliverance, and only thus do we begin to judge things from *God's* viewpoint. Then she pointed out that David was fighting "the battles of the LORD" (v. 28), and therefore it was not for him to think of avenging an insult to himself.

Her closing words in verses 29-31 are very beautiful. First, she makes reference to the relentless persecution of Saul, but of becoming loyalty to the throne speaks of him as "a man" rather than "the king" and assures David in most striking language that his life should be preserved (v. 29). Second, looking away from his abject condition, she confidently contemplated the time when the Lord would make him "ruler over Israel." How heartening was this unto the tried servant of God! Thus too does God often send us a word of comfort when we are most sorely tried. Third, she pleaded with David that he would let his coming glory regulate his present actions, so that in that day, his conscience would not reproach him for previous follies. If we kept more before us the judgment-seat of Christ, surely our conduct would be more regulated thereby. Finally, she besought David to remember her, his "handmaid," when he should ascend the throne.

"As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear" (Pro 25:12). Abigail was a wise reprover of David's passion and he gave an obedient ear to the reproof according to his own principle, 'Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness' (Psa 141:5). Never was such an admonition either better given or better taken" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Herein are the children of God made manifest. They are tractable, open to conviction, willing to be shown their faults, but the children of the devil ("sons of Belial") are like Nabal—churlish, stubborn, proud, unbending. Ah, my reader, lay this to heart. If we will listen to faithful counselors now, we shall be delivered from much folly and spared bitter regrets in the future.

God blessed this word of Abigail's to David, so that he was now able to view the whole transaction and his own bitter spirit and purpose in a true light. First, he praises God for sending him this check in a sinful course (v. 32). It is a true mark of spirituality when we discern and own the Lord's hand in such deliverances. Second, he thanked Abigail for so kindly interposing between him and the sin he was about to commit (v. 33). Ah, we must not only receive a reproof patiently, but *thank* the faithful giver of it. Note that instead of speaking lightly of the evil he premeditated, David emphasized its enormity. Third, he dismissed her with a message of peace and accepted her offering. The whole shows us wise men are open to sound advice, even though it comes from their inferiors, and that oaths must not bind us to do that which is evil.

Finally, let us point out for the benefit of preachers that we have in the above incident a blessed picture of an elect soul being drawn to Christ. 1. Abigail was yoked to Nabal—so by nature we are wedded to the law as a covenant of works and it is “against us” (Col 2:14). 2. She was barren to Nabal, see Romans 7:1-4. 3. It was tidings of impending doom which caused her to seek David (v. 17). 4. She took her place in the dust before him (v. 23). 5. She came to him confessing “iniquity” (v. 24). 6. She sought “forgiveness” (v. 28). 7. She was persuaded of David's goodness (v.28). 8. She owned his exaltation (v. 30). 9. She, like the dying thief, begs to be “remembered” (v. 31). 10. David granted her request, accepted her person, and said, “Go up in peace” (v. 35)!

## WAITING AT WISDOM'S GATES

### Part Two

But another thing is said of the blessed man. He does more than hear Wisdom's voice, he watches at Wisdom's gates. “Blessed is the man that heareth me, *watching* daily at my gates” (Pro 8:34). And what are these gates at which the blessed man watcheth? By Wisdom's gates, I understand those places where Wisdom speaks by those whom she calls her maidens—ministers called and taught by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Among the Jews, counsels were held in the gates of the city—causes were heard and decided, and judgment was given. The oppressors were condemned and the oppressed were delivered. Property was redeemed and contracts were entered into. So, also, in Wisdom's gates, where Wisdom presides and speaks, teaches and directs, these things spiritually are done, and heavenly business is transacted. At her gates, she assembles and gathers together her children, to speak to them and to give them good counsel. Here she reveals the secrets of their hearts; passes judgment upon what is false and evil; takes away their rotten props; drives them out of their refuges of lies; exposes the deceit of their hearts; opens them to receive the truth, and to attend unto the things that are spoken by her; brings redemption into the soul; saves it from the oppressor, from the delusions of Satan, and the accusations of conscience; and sweetly reveals her pardon and peace. Here she strengthens the weak hands and confirms the feeble knees; comforts the distressed, satiates the longing soul; fills the empty soul with good things; opens blind eyes, unstops deaf ears, circumcises the heart; and makes the lame to leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing.

Here righteous judgment is given, a true balance is held, and right and just weights are put therein, and the Lord is known to be a God of judgments, by whom actions are weighed. These are the gates of righteousness, the gates of Wisdom, and here the righteous resort and here the blessed man “watches.”

Yes, he *watches*. He does not go out of form or custom, or merely to hear a fine *orator* or to satisfy conscience. No, he *watches*. As the criminal on the gallows watches and strains his eyes, looking to the skirts of the crowd and to the distant hills, if peradventure he may see the messenger of mercy, dispatched from the king’s presence with the wished-for reprieve; as the sick patient anxiously looks toward the door, in expectation of the far-famed physician; as the shipwrecked mariner watches the dim spot in the horizon, in hopes it may prove to be a sail approaching for his deliverance; as the suitor watches the face of him to whom he presents his petition, or the beggar the opening of the gate in hopes of receiving an alms; even so does the blessed man watch at Wisdom’s gates. He watches for some token for good, some message of peace, some sweet consolation; some sensible and powerful manifestation of love and freedom, mercy and grace; some interpretation of his case, and unraveling of his dark and difficult experience; some light on his path, some crumbs from the bread of life, some shinings and beams from the Sun of righteousness; some instruction in righteousness, some promise of good things; some proof that *his* spots are the spots of God’s children, that he is not deceived, that he is in the way of life, and that he is among the jewels of the Lord. He watches attentively, he longs earnestly, for these blessings. He goes to Wisdom’s gates in hopes of hearing glad tidings; of being filled and rejoiced, of having pardon and peace sealed in his heart; of hearing Wisdom’s voice, seeing her arm revealed, feeling her healing power, not to have his judgment only informed, but to have his heart affected; not to be seen of man, but to see the Lord’s face and to have the light of His countenance lifted up upon him. Thus he watches at Wisdom’s gates, in expectation of seeing and receiving from her hands a good and perfect gift. “Blessed is the man that *heareth* me, *watching* daily at my gates” (Pro 8:34).

The blessed man is said to attend *daily*, to hear and watch for Wisdom. Thus these blessed watchers watch daily and wait for some hope, some comfort, some promise, some light, and blessing from Wisdom. They are found at Wisdom’s gates as often as they open and they are able to come. There is no need to exhort them to go there. They require no entreaties. They are hungry and want food; needy and poor, and want to be enriched; naked, and want clothing; cold, and want to be warmed; miserable, and want to be comforted; guilty, and want to be pardoned. They do not mind walking a few miles to hear the Word, for the desire of their soul is towards it. They endure affliction and watch continually, sometimes with more, and sometimes with less fervor. Those who are very unlike Wisdom’s watching children can be kept from hearing and watching because the road is long and rough, the weather cold or damp, or because some trifling obstacle is in the way. But observe the word “my”—“that watcheth daily at my gates.” “*My* sheep hear *my* voice...and a stranger they will not follow,” (Joh 10:5, 27) saith Christ. Thus blessed hearers and blessed watchers cannot sit under a legal or dry doctrinal ministry, in which Wisdom’s voice is not heard, and be satisfied therewith. Though they would feign fill their belly with the husks which the swine eat, they cannot. It will not do for them, they must have “clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan” (Isa 30:24). They cannot sit under a dead minister who exalts the creature and exhorts him to do what he feels he cannot do, for he has “the sentence of death” in himself, that he should not trust in himself (2Co 1:9). The blessed hearers and watchers will never be content with a legal preacher or a dry, though correct letter, preacher. They want power, unction, experience, interpretation of their cases, and to have the footsteps of

the flock (Song 1:8) traced out, that they may go forth their way by them. There are thousands who are very attentive and regular at their churches and chapels, are very fond of being there early, and never miss when the doors are open, who are far from being among the number of the *blessed* hearers and watchers, for they can hear and watch like strangers, which blessed hearers and watchers cannot do. They can delight in the gates of Satan, transformed into an angel of light (2Co 11:14), but blessed hearers and watchers can approve of Wisdom's gates only.

“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors” (Pro 8:34). Here is another mark of a blessed man—he *waits* at the posts of Wisdom's *doors*. But what are those doors? A door is that which we pass through to obtain entrance into a house, chamber, or private enclosure, and is the only lawful and proper inlet to those who come in a direct and blessed way. The Lord Jesus said of Himself, “I am the door,” implying that none can enter into the fold or bond of the covenant, but through Him. They must not only have a sight of Him afar off, but in experience or nearness to and entry into Him, ere they can, as His sheep, lie down and feed in the fold of the covenant of grace and delight themselves in God's everlasting, electing, redeeming, renewing, and preserving love. Christ is Himself the covenant, as it is said in Isaiah 42:6, and He is one of the divine covenanters (Zec 9:11). In Him are hid all the covenant stores of wisdom and knowledge, salvation and righteousness, mercy and truth, peace and life. Therefore, the soul that would enjoy these blessings must have more than a letter knowledge of them. He must handle and enjoy, taste and feast and this he cannot do until, by the blessed Spirit, he has such a revelation of Jesus as to assure him he is “a man in Christ.”

The blessed man that hears Wisdom and watches at her gates, at which are laid up all manner of precious fruits (Song 7:13), knows and feels this. He has such a savor of the preciousness which Jesus is and has in Himself, that he pants after the enjoyment thereof. He is not content to “go about Zion” and to mark her walls and bulwarks, (Psa 8:12, 13) as thousands are, but he wants to *find an entrance into Zion*, to be brought into the citadel of safety, and the banqueting house of love, and therefore his eyes are up unto the Lord (Psa 123:1-2). He is “looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:2), and waiting with anxiety and longing desires, in hope that He will put forth His hand, and take him in to Him, as Noah put forth his hand and took into the ark the dove which had been fluttering over the waste of waters and drowned bodies, and could find no rest for the sole of her foot—not being able to rest on that which had destroyed so many, nor on the corruption which floated on every side. He waits and knocks also at the posts of the doors of love, mercy, and salvation. He knows what they are in the letter and has sometimes had glimpses and rays of the Sun of righteousness darting through them into his soul. He has been very near the free enjoyment of what his soul desires, even at “the posts.” But he wants more than this. He wants to find an *entrance into* the doors, by assurance entering into him. He wants the witness of the Spirit and the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit. For these, he begs and knocks, with sighs and groans, and hungerings and thirstings. Sometimes he fears the doors will never be opened to him, he is so vile and foul, unbelieving and hardhearted. He sees there is a “door of faith” (Act 14:27) and a “door of hope” (Hos 2:15), and hears that they are opened to waiting and troubled souls in the wilderness (Hos 2:14). But he must have more than *hearing* these things as truths and blessed realities. He must *enjoy and enter into* them as such.

Now such a waiter has faith in Christ, but it is only like a drop of oil under the muddy water, which is struggling to rise to the top, or like a bladder or cork caught in the seaweeds and held down thereby. Though it is in its nature to rise and ascend, it cannot. He has, then, faith to believe his need of these things and to cry to the dear Lord to open to him, to let him in. He has faith and hope sufficient to keep him knocking and calling for admission, like a storm-beaten and shivering



traveler at the door of an inn, the keeper whereof is in bed and asleep, and who, if he hears his voice, appears not inclined to rise and open to him. He waits for God to enable him to receive the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul (1Pe 1:9), to convince him that he *has* “faith of the operation of God” (Col 2:12). He cannot conclude that he has true faith and that his is a good hope through grace (2Th 2:16) till he can feel thereby assured he is elected and born of God. False professors, who are left-hand goats and not right-hand sheep, and so never hear the voice of Wisdom, get into the full assurance of faith very easily. Nothing is more simple to them. They say, “you have *only* to believe.” But *only to believe* is as impossible to Wisdom’s waiting children, as for them to grasp the whole firmament with their hands or to lay hold upon and enter into the sun. They feel their helplessness, weakness, unbelief, darkness, and blindness. They are like wayfaring men, who, although they may perchance be in the right way, cannot be assured thereby, because all behind and before, above and around them, is thick darkness, and they know not where they are and are afraid to proceed or go backwards lest they should fall into a bog or pit, or over a precipice, but they call and shout, in hopes of being heard and directed in the way. They stand still, and wait and watch for the break of day, for the light to visit them.

Thus Wisdom’s watching, waiting children feel what David was experiencing when he said, “LORD, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the LORD more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning” (Psa 130:2-6). Now a soul in this state is a “blessed” soul. He is a wise son, an heir of God, and a joint-heir together with Christ. Though under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the Father (Gal 4:2), yet is he a true son and not a bastard (Heb 12:8). Although he is but at the *posts* of Wisdom’s doors, holding on by only a little hope, a little strength, a little light, a something which will not let him give up watching, but which keeps him looking for the morning, for the day-star to arise in his heart (2Pe 1:19) and the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings (Mal 4:2), he is manifestly, though not to himself, one of God’s children. Yea, though he is like the chapped ground, which, parched with the drougths of summer, cleaves into deep fissures, and can only open its many mouths, and gape for the refreshing and reviving rain. For it is the blessed Spirit who has taught him that without Jesus he can do nothing and that has made him open his mouth wide, that He might fill it (Psa 81:10). He may wait long and seemingly in vain, but in the set time (Psa 102:13), God will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground (Isa 44:3). He will show him that He has set before him an open door and no man can shut it (Rev 3:8), while like Hannah, he speaks and prays only in his heart (1Sa 1:13). God hears the voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace (Jer 30:5). Wisdom sees him at the posts of her doors, though he cannot see that. Wisdom observes and cares for him. Wisdom will keep him watching as long as it is good for him, but not a moment longer. There is a set time to favour Zion, (Psa 102:13) and it cannot be hastened nor retarded. The vision, saith the Lord, is *for an appointed time*, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie. Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry (Hab 2:3). Those who, like Simeon, are found waiting for the consolation of Israel (Luk 2:25), like Simeon will, ere the earthly house of their tabernacle be dissolved, be blessed with holding their Savior in the arms of their faith and will be enabled to say, “Lord, now lettest thou [or, *now* thou lettest] thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luk 2:29-30).

Thus a waiting soul is a blessed soul. “Blessed *is* [not *shall be*] the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” (Pro 8:34). He *is* a saved soul,

though he cannot say *my* God and *my* Savior. He is not blessed because he hears, and watches and waits, but because he is blessed, therefore a hearing, watching, and waiting spirit is given him. Patience is the fruit of the Spirit and the Spirit puts forth no fruits but in elect souls. He who groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body (that is, who waits till he shall be brought into the full enjoyment of the redemption of his body, which is redeemed as well as his soul—or who waits, longing to be rid of his body of death and corruption—who waits, desiring to be freed from sin and to enjoy the full fruition of the adoption of the sons of God), is a blessed man (Rom 8:23). And so is the man who, though sorely oppressed and cast down, is not destroyed, nor bereft of hope, nor able to consent to evil, but endures temptation (Jam 1:12). “Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD” (Psa 128:1). “*Blessed* are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *Blessed* are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted, etc., etc. (Mat 5:3-12). Now in some one or more of these states all who are born of God are found and all such, though differing in the depth of their feelings and experience, are blessed persons and hear Wisdom (not the mere words of man), nor are taken up with fine, empty oratory—not hear this or that good man, for Wisdom saith, “Blessed is the man that heareth *me*, watching [not loungeth listlessly] daily at *my* gates, waiting at the posts of *my* doors” (Pro 8:34).

Happy, blessed man that waits in the spirit for Jesus! God says he *is* blessed, He *has* blessed him, and none can curse him, neither Satan, nor the law, nor sin, nor man. Blessed is every one that blesseth him and cursed is he that curseth him. God will never be tired, however long the time may be to the watching, hearing soul. He may fear he will be cut off, but God declares He will preserve and keep him. “He that trusteth in the LORD shall never be confounded or put to shame,” and therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you. For the Lord is a God of judgment and leads in the way of righteousness, and in the midst of the paths of judgment (Pro 8:20). “Blessed *are all* they that wait for Him” (Isa 30:18), (John Gadsby, 1843).

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 2. The Purpose of God (Summarized)

We are not unmindful of the fact that this magazine is read by two widely different classes of people. First, it is being sent unto a goodly number of preachers and others who are fitted for the deeper things of God. Second, the greater number who receive it have not enjoyed the privileges of the former and so are heavily handicapped when they take up such articles as in this present series on “Dispensationalism.” Thus the happy task before us of seeking to minister unto those whose needs are similar, yet whose capacities to receive and digest food is so varied, is not without its difficulties. On the one hand, we wish (by God’s grace) to maintain the level indicated by the title of our little paper, “*Studies in the Scriptures*,” yet on the other hand, we desire wisdom from above so that we may minister in such a way that (if they will but take prayerful

pains) even the babes of Christ may be edified. It has therefore occurred to us that if we give a summary of the last three articles (really one in three parts) some may be helped.

First, we pointed out (in the March issue) that the favourite text of the “Dispensationalists”—“rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15)—makes no reference whatever to the sectioning of God’s Word and limiting large portions of it to companies long since dead and gone. That instead, 2 Timothy 2:15 bids the servant of God see to it that he ministers the Word suitably unto the various conditions and circumstances of his congregation. The members of his spiritual family are in widely different states of soul—some are cold and sluggish and need rousing, some are sad and need comforting, some are ignorant and need instructing, some are feeble and need strengthening, some are flirting with the world and need admonishing. As a wise parent suits the diet unto the ages and health of his children, so will a well-instructed pastor.

Second, we pointed how that the great majority of the “Dispensationalists” begin at the wrong place. Instead of starting with the “Adamic dispensation,” they need to go back to the everlasting covenant, which God entered into with Christ on behalf of His elect before the foundation of the world. That instead of commencing with Genesis 1, we need to make Ephesians 1:3-6 the foundation of our study and thinking. It is there that we find the key which opens up to us God’s “Program for the Ages.” It is there we discover the character and contents of God’s eternal purpose, which purpose is slowly but surely being accomplished during the course of human history. It is there we learn that the grand center of God’s counsels is the glorifying of Himself in and by Christ, through the redeeming of His favoured people.

In commenting upon the language of Ephesians 1:3, we sought to repudiate a double error which the “Dispensationalists” have made there. First, that the contents of that verse describe blessings which *only* the saints of this Christian dispensation receive, and second, that its terms are in designed contrast from the material blessings which Israel enjoyed in Canaan. That verse 3 cannot be restricted unto Christians of this age is clear from what follows in verse 4-6—the connective, “according as” at the beginning of verse 4, shows they speak of one and the same company. Now *all* of God’s elect, from Abel onwards, were “chosen in Christ,” were “predestinated unto the adoption of children,” and were “accepted in the Beloved.” This should be abundantly clear to every spiritual reader who will carefully ponder the terms of John 10:16, Ephesians 2:19-21, Hebrews 11:40.

In developing our refutation of the second error, we called attention to the fact that the Old Testament saints, equally with the New Testament saints, were blessed with “all *spiritual* blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” First, we pointed out how that the language of Ephesians 1:3 points a designed contrast from the spiritual “blessings” which we received *in* unfallen Adam.

In Ephesians 4:18, Christians are reminded that in their unregenerate state they were “*alienated from the life of God.*” Now such language would be meaningless if the saints had *never* enjoyed the life of God. 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us that “in Adam all die,” died spiritually, so all were once alive in Adam, alive spiritually. But Adam, being a man of the earth (“of the earth, earthy”) though we were originally blessed with *spiritual* blessings in him, yet only as in an earthly man. In blessed antithesis from this, the entire election of grace have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ, the heavenly Man. *That* is the contrast pointed by Ephesians 1:3.

Now these spiritual blessings *in heavenly places* were “inherited” in Christ by all of God’s elect from Abel onwards. That the “blessing of Abraham” (i.e. the blessing Abraham received from God), was of a *spiritual* and not of a material nature, is clear from Galatians 3:14, and that Abraham was aware that the ultimate reception of it awaited him in heaven may be plainly seen

by a reference to Hebrews 11:11-16. Then we sought to show that the “blessing” which Jacob received from Isaac was identical with the “blessing of Abraham,” though it was couched in the language of earthly things. That statement, once it is seen to be Scriptural, should revolutionize our understanding of much of the Old Testament Scriptures. Spiritual blessings are there frequently referred to under material figures, heavenly favours under earthly shadows. Just as we are told in Revelation 11:8 that the city of Jerusalem “which *spiritually* is called Sodom and Egypt,” so very many of the places, objects, and things referred to in the Old Testament have a spiritual meaning.

In amplifying the above thought we appealed to the Psalms. If they be read impartially we cannot but see that the soul experiences of the spiritual in Israel were quite on a par with the attainment of the most eminent saints of the New Testament. The very first Psalm strikes the keynote and describes at length the man who is truly “blessed.” That figures of speech abound in that book is obvious at a glance and any attempt to interpret literally only reduces them to an absurdity. Take the well-known language of the twenty-third. Who is so senseless as to understand the “green pastures” and the “still waters” to signify only material food and drink? Then why should those who insist on carnalizing the sacred oracles ridicule those who give a *spiritual* interpretation to “Mount Zion,” the “cedars of Lebanon,” the “snows of Hermon,” etc., etc.?

It is tragic beyond words to find those who are now looked up to as the champions of orthodoxy perpetuating the great error into which the Jews of old fell. *They* had great reverence for the Holy Scriptures, had implicit confidence in their divine authorship, and yet in their gross carnality saw no deeper than the outward letter of the Word, literalizing everything and missing the spiritual meaning and application of it. Even the apostles were considerably tainted by this poison. When their Lord warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they imagined He was rebuking them because they had “taken no bread” (Mat 16:7). When He said to them, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of,” (Joh 4:32) they asked each other, “Hath any man brought Him ought to eat?” (Joh 4:33). With such solemn examples before us are we not without excuse if we take not the warning to heart! Is it not obvious that spiritual things can only be “spiritually discerned” and that for this we are dependent upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit!

“I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa 27:3). How blessed is such language as this when I discern here the promise of Christ to nourish and preserve His Church on earth! “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (Deu 25:4). How blessed to learn that that was written “*altogether for our sakes*,” that God’s servants today might know that “he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope” (1Co 9:10)! Here the Holy Spirit Himself has placed a sure key in our hands and shown us *how* to open the *spiritual* meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures—the “oxen” were but figures of Christian evangelists.

In the next place, we sought to show that even during the Old Testament times God was administering the everlasting covenant, that under the legal economy of Moses, *grace* was being exercised unto all those who had been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. This is admittedly the most difficult aspect of our subject and at a later date we hope, God willing, to devote a series of articles to a consideration and exposition of the covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David, giving particular attention to the Sinaitic. Yet we trust sufficient has been said in our last article, particularly in the lengthy quotation made from Samuel Hopkins, to throw some light thereon. The *Gospel*, as well as the Law, was preached unto Israel,

preached largely (though not exclusively) through the whole ceremonial system and ritual which was established under Moses.

In the purpose of God, the Lamb was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8), and therefore each of His elect became (at their regeneration and conversion) interested in and sharers of the benefits which Christ’s atoning sacrifice was to procure for them, namely, the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, the gift of faith, the forgiveness of their sins, and the “exceeding great and precious promises of God” (2Pe 1:4). These were made over to them in the covenant of grace or in other words, were revealed to them by the Gospel of God. The covenant of grace was administered by God from the days of Abel onwards or none of Adam’s fallen race would ever have been taken into the favour of God. True that covenant of grace was administered in different forms and by varied methods, yet the substance of it was always the same. The deliverance of Noah and his family from the flood, of Lot from Sodom, of Israel from Egypt, of Daniel from the lion’s den, were all so many adumbrations of the redemptive deliverance which Christ has wrought for His people.

The giving of the moral law unto Israel served a number of different purposes and needs to be considered from a number of various angles. First, it announced the unchanging requirements of God’s righteousness and holiness. Second, it revealed to fallen man his spiritual impotency, his utter inability to meet the claims of his Maker and Governor. Third, it revealed the need for substitutionary sacrifice and served as a constant foil unto the ceremonial law. Fourth, it also furnished a rule of conduct unto those who trusted in the sacrificial blood and desired to please Him who had made such gracious provision to meet their deep needs. Grace reigns through righteousness (Rom 5:21) and not at the expense of it, and if all the details of the Sinaiatic covenant be carefully pondered, there will be found a blessed and wondrous mingling of justice and mercy, grace and righteousness, Gospel and Law. But as we expect to devote a separate article to the consideration of the Law in this present series, we will not here further anticipate the contents of the same.

Few passages in the New Testament afford more help when pondering the varied *character* of the Mosaic economy than Romans 10:5-9. There the apostle quotes a Scripture from the Pentateuch, which seems to have been completely lost sight of by our modern “Dispensationalists.” In Deuteronomy 30:14, we find Jehovah saying through Moses, “The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it”--see the whole passage, verses 11-15. This, the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the apostle, expressly declares to be “the righteousness of faith” (i.e., the Gospel) and then Paul adds, “that is, the word of faith, which we preach” (Rom 10:8). Let the reader attentively weigh the language of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 and then ponder the apostle’s inspired comment thereon. Does not this one example furnish clear evidence that the language of the Old Testament can only be understood in the light of the New?

But there is something more there in that Deuteronomy passage which we particularly wish the reader to see clearly. The apostle affirms in plain language that the Gospel he preached was proclaimed by Moses too, as he says again in Romans 3:21, “the righteousness of God” (that is, the perfect obedience of Christ which is imputed to all who believe in Him, Romans 3:24) which is now manifested more fully and openly under this new covenant or testament, was “witnessed by the law and the prophets.” Note it well that the Law and the prophets not only “predicted” this righteousness of God, but definitely “witnessed” to the same. Further proof is furnished by the apostle in Romans 4, where he cites the cases of Abraham and David, as being justified by faith without the deeds of the Law.

How clear it is, then, that the Old and New Testaments possess a central unity, that God has had only one way of saving from the beginning, and that the covenant of grace has been administered by Him in every stage of human history. And how clear it is that modern “Dispensationalists” have an entirely erroneous conception of the Mosaic economy! The teaching of the “Scofield Bible,” and all who echo its misleading and mischievous novelties, is to be steadfastly resisted, no matter how unpopular such resistance may render one among “Fundamentalists.” When a man makes the studied statement that “As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ, the point of testing is *no longer legal obedience* as the *condition of salvation*, but accepting or rejecting of Christ” (as Mr. Scofield does in his notes on John 1:16), he at once exposes fundamental ignorance both of “the Law” and “the Gospel,” and therefore is no safe teacher for lovers of the truth to follow.

In conclusion, may we suggest that those who have been able to follow this article and have, under God, been helped by the same, turn back now and prayerfully *study* the three which precede it. We shall greatly value the prayers of God’s people that we may be definitely guided by the Holy Spirit in preparing the remaining articles of this series. The need for them is great. The difficulty of receiving them is great too, for all of us have much to *unlearn* and only divine grace can enable us to re-examine the whole subject impartially, be willing to relinquish errors which hitherto we thought were God’s truth, and receive with meekness what God has for us.

## LORD AND SAVIOR

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD” (Isa 55:8). Most solemnly do these words make manifest the terrible havoc which sin has wrought in fallen mankind. They are out of touch with their Maker. Nay more, they are “*alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*” (Eph 4:18). In consequence of this the soul has lost its anchorage, everything has been thrown out of gear, and human depravity has turned all things upside down. Instead of subordinating the concerns of this life to the interests of the life to come, man devotes himself principally to the present, and gives little or no thought unto the eternal hereafter. Instead of putting the good of his soul before the needs of the body, man is chiefly occupied about food and raiment. Instead of man’s great aim being to please God, ministering to self has become his prime business.

Man’s thoughts ought to be governed by God’s Word and his ways regulated by God’s revealed will. But the converse is the case. Hence it is that the things which are of great price in the sight of God (1Pe 3:4) are despised by the fallen creature and hence it is that “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luk 16:15). Man has turned things topsy turvy. This is sadly evidenced when he attempts to handle divine things. The perversity which sin has caused appears in our *reversing* God’s order. Holy Scripture speaks of man’s “spirit and soul and body” (1Th 5:23), but when the world makes reference thereto, it says “body, soul, and spirit”—witness the motto of the Y.M.C.A. Scripture declares that Christians are

“strangers and pilgrims” (Heb 11:13) in this scene, but nine times out of ten, even good men talk and write of “pilgrims and strangers.”

This tendency to reverse God’s order of things is part and parcel of fallen man’s nature and unless the Holy Spirit interposes by working in us a miracle of grace, its effects are *fatal* to the soul. Nowhere do we have a more fearful and tragic example of this than in the evangelistic message which is now being given out, though scarcely any one seems aware of it. That something is radically wrong with the world is widely recognized. That Christendom too is in a sad state many are painfully conscious, that error abounds on every side, that practical godliness is at a low ebb, that worldliness has devitalized most of the churches, is apparent to an increasing number of earnest souls. But there are few indeed whose eyes are open to see *how* bad things are, few indeed perceive that things are rotten at the very foundation. Yet such is the case.

God’s way of salvation is almost entirely unknown today. The “Gospel” which is being preached, even in “orthodox” circles, where it is supposed that the faith once delivered to the saints is still being earnestly contended for, is an *erroneous* gospel. Even there man has *reversed* God’s order. With very rare exceptions, it is being taught (and has been for upwards of thirty years) that nothing more is required in order for a sinner’s salvation than that he “accept Christ as his personal *Savior*.” Later, he ought to bow to Him *as Lord*, consecrate his life to Him, and serve Him fully and gladly. But though he fails to do so, nevertheless, heaven is sure unto him. He will lack peace and joy now, and probably miss some millennial “crown,” but having received Christ “as his personal Savior,” he has been delivered from the wrath to come. Such is a reversing of God’s order. It is the devil’s lie and only the Day to come will show how many have been fatally deceived by it.

We are well aware that the above is strong language and likely to come as a shock unto many of our readers, but we beg them to test it by what now follows. In every passage of the New Testament where these two titles occur together, it is “Lord and Savior,” and never “Savior and Lord.” The mother of Jesus averred, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luk 1:46-47). Unless JEHOVAH had first become her “Lord,” most certainly He would not have been her “Savior.” No spiritual mind that seriously ponders the matter can have any difficulty in perceiving this. How could the thrice holy God save one who scorned His authority, despised His honour, and flouted His revealed will? It is indeed infinite grace that God is ready to be reconciled to us when we throw down the weapons of our rebellion against Him, but it would be an act of unrighteousness, a putting a premium upon lawlessness, were He to pardon any sinner before he was first reconciled to His offended Maker.

In 2 Peter 1:10, the saints of God are bidden to make their “calling and election sure” (and this, by *adding to* their faith the other graces enumerated in verses 5 to 7), and are assured that if they do so they shall never fail, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto them abundantly “into the everlasting kingdom of our [1] Lord and [2] Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:11). That is, an abundant entrance should be given them now into His kingdom of grace and hereafter into His kingdom of glory. But what we would particularly note is *the order* in which Christ’s titles are here mentioned. It is not “our Savior and Lord” as the corrupt preaching and teaching of this degenerate day presents it, but instead, “Lord and Savior,” for He becomes the Savior of none until the heart and will unreservedly receive Him as LORD.

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2Pe 2:20). Here the apostle refers to those who had a head-knowledge of the truth and then apostatized. There had been a reformation in their outward lives,

but no regeneration of the heart. For a while they were delivered from the pollutions of the world, but no supernatural work of grace having been wrought in their souls, the lustings of the flesh proved too strong and they were again overcome, returning to their former manner of life like the dog to its vomit and the sow to its wallowing in the mire. The apostasy is described as “to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (v. 21), which has reference to the terms of discipleship made known in the Gospel. But what we are particularly concerned with is the Spirit’s order. These apostates had been favoured with the “knowledge of [1] the Lord and [2] Savior Jesus Christ.”

In 2 Peter 3:18, God’s people are exhorted to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Here again God’s order is the very opposite of man’s. Nor is this merely a technical detail, concerning which a mistake is of little moment. No, the subject of which we are now treating is basic, vital, fundamental, and error at this point is *fatal*. Those who have not submitted unto Christ as LORD, but are trusting in Him as “Savior” are deceived, and unless God graciously disillusion them, will go down to their everlasting burnings with a lie in their right hand (Isa 44:20).

The same principal is clearly illustrated in passages where other titles of Christ occur. Take the opening verse of the New Testament, where He is presented as “Jesus Christ, [1] the son of David, [2] the son of Abraham.” Waiving now the “dispensational” signification of these titles, let us view them from the doctrinal and practical viewpoint, which should *ever* be our *first* consideration. “Son of David” brings in the throne. It emphasizes His authority. It demands allegiance to His scepter. And “son of David” comes *before* “son of Abraham”! Again, in Acts 5:31, we are told that God had exalted Jesus to His own right hand “to be [1] a Prince and [2] a Savior.” The concept embodied in the title “Prince” is that of supreme dominion and authority, as Revelation 1:5 clearly shows, “The prince of the kings of the earth.”

If we turn to the book of Acts and read it attentively, we shall quickly discover that the message of the apostles was altogether different—not only in emphasis, but in substance—from the preaching of our times. On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared, “Whosoever shall call on the name of *the Lord* shall be saved” (Act 2:21) and reminded his hearers that God had made Jesus (or manifested Him to be) “both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36), not Christ and Lord! To Cornelius and his household, Peter presented Christ as “Lord of all” (Act 10:36). When Barnabas came to Antioch, he “exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Act 11:23). There also Paul and Barnabas “commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Act 14:23). At the great synod in Jerusalem, Peter reminded his fellows that the Gentiles would “seek after [not only a “Savior,” but] the Lord” (Act 15:17). To the Philippian jailer and his household, Paul and Silas preached, “the word of *the Lord*” (Act 16:32).

What we specially desire the reader to see is not only that the apostles *emphasized* the Lordship of Christ, but that they made surrender thereto *essential unto salvation*. This is clear from many other passages. For example, we read, “And believers were the more added to [not “Christ,” but] the Lord” (Act 5:14). “And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to *the Lord*” (Act 9:35). “And many believed in the Lord” (Act 9:42). “And much people was added unto the Lord” (Act 11:24). “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord” (Act 13:12). “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house” (Act 18:8).

The fact is that very, very few today have any right conception of what a scriptural and saving *conversion* consists of. The call to it is set forth in Isaiah 55:7, “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.” The character of it is described in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Conversion, then, is a turning from sin unto holiness, from self unto God, from Satan unto Christ. It is the voluntary surrendering of ourselves to the Lord Jesus, not only by consent of dependence upon His merits, but also by a willing readiness to obey Him, giving up the keys of our hearts, and laying them at His feet. It is the soul declaring, “O LORD our God, other lords beside thee *have had* dominion over us [namely, the world, the flesh, and the devil]: but by thee only *will we* make mention of thy name” (Isa 26:13).

“Conversion consists in our being recovered from our present sinfulness to the moral image of God or which is the same thing, to a real conformity to the moral law. But a conformity to the moral law consists in *a disposition to* love God supremely, live to Him ultimately, and delight in Him superlatively, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, and *a practice agreeing thereto*. And therefore conversion consists in our being recovered from what we are by nature to such a disposition and practice” (Jas. Bellamy, 1770). Searching indeed are those words in Acts 3:26, “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” *This* is Christ’s mode of blessing men—*converting* them. However the Gospel may instruct and enlighten men, so long as they remain the slaves of sin, it has conferred upon them no eternal advantage, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom 6:16).

Let us point out here that there is a very real difference between believing in the deity of Christ and surrendering to His Lordship. There are many who are firmly persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God. They have not a doubt that He is the Maker of heaven and earth. But that is no proof of conversion. The demons owned Him as the “Son of God” (Mat 8:29). What we are pressing in this article is not the mind’s assent to the Godhood of Christ, but the will’s yielding to His authority, so that the life is regulated by His commandments. While there must be a believing in Him, there must also be a subjecting of ourselves to Him—the one being useless without the other. As Hebrews 5:9 so plainly tells us, “He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey him*.”

Yet in the very face of the sunlight-clear teaching of Holy Writ, intimated above, when unsaved people are concerned about (we will not say their dreadful state, but) their future destiny and inquire, “What must we do to be saved?” the only answer they are now given is, “Accept Christ as your personal Savior,” no effort being made to press upon them (as Paul did upon the Philippian jailer) the Lordship of Christ. John 1:12 is the verse which many a blind leader of the blind glibly quotes, “But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” Perhaps the reader objects, “But nothing is there said about receiving Christ as Lord.” Directly, no, nor is anything there said about receiving Christ “as a personal Savior”! It is a whole Christ which must be received or none at all. Why seek to halve Him?

But if the objector will carefully ponder the context of John 1:12 he will, unless blinded by prejudice, quickly discover that it is as LORD Christ *is* there presented and as such must be “received” by us. In the previous verse we are told, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Joh 1:1). In *what* character does that view Him? Why, clearly, as the Owner and Master of Israel and it was as such they “received Him not.” Consider too what He does for those who do receive Him, “to them gave he power [the right or prerogative] to become the sons of God.” Who but the Lord of lords is vested with authority to give unto others the title to be sons of God!

In his unregenerate state, no sinner is subject to Christ *as Lord*, though he may be fully convinced of and freely acknowledge His deity and employ the words, “Lord Jesus” when referring to Him. When we say that no unregenerate person, “is subject unto Christ as Lord,” we mean the His will is not the rule of life—to please, obey, honour, and glorify Christ is not the dominant aim, disposition, and striving of the heart. No, so far from *this* being the case, his real sentiment is, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?” (Exo 5:2). The whole trend of his life, in a saying, is, “We will not have this man to *reign over us*” (Luk 19:14). Despite all their religious pretensions, the actual attitude of the unregenerate unto God is, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve [be in subjection to] him?” (Job 21:14-15). Their conduct intimates “our lips are our own: who is Lord over *us*!” (Psa 12:4). Instead of surrendering to God in Christ, every sinner turns unto *his own* way (Isa 53:6), living only to please self.

When the Holy Spirit convicts one of sin, He causes that person to see what SIN *really* is. He makes the convicted one to understand and feel that sin is rebellion against God, that it is a refusal to submit to the Lord. The Spirit causes him to recognize and realize that he has been an insurrectionist against Him who is exalted above all. He is now convicted not only of this or that sin, this or that “idol,” but is brought to realize that his whole life has been a *fighting against God*, that he has knowingly, willfully, and constantly ignored and defiled Him, deliberately preferring and choosing to go his own way. The work of the Spirit in God’s elect is not so much to show and convince each of them that they are “lost sinners” (the conscience of the natural man knows that, without any supernatural operation of the Spirit!), as it is to reveal the exceeding *sinfulness* of sin (Rom 7:13), and that by making us to see and feel the fact that all sin is a species of spiritual *anarchy*, a defiance of the “Lordship” of God.

Hence it is that when a man has really and truly been “convicted” by the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit, the first effect is complete and abject *despair* in the heart. It now appears to that one that his case is utterly hopeless. He now perceives he has sinned *so* grievously that it appears impossible for a righteous God to do anything but damn him for all eternity. He now sees what a *fool* he has been in thus heeding the voice of temptation, fighting against the Most High, and in losing his own soul. He now recalls how often God has spoken to him in the past—as a child, as a youth, as an adult, upon a bed of sickness, in the death of a loved one, in adversities—and how he refused to hearken, deliberately turning a deaf ear, and defiantly going on in *his own* way. He now feels that he has in truth sinned away his day of grace.

Ah, my reader, the ground *must* be plowed and harrowed before it is made receptive to the seed. So the heart must be prepared by these harrowing experiences, the stubborn will broken, *before* it is ready for the balm of the Gospel. But O how very few ever *are* savingly “convicted” by the Spirit! As the Spirit continues His work in the soul, plowing still deeper, revealing the hideousness and heinousness of SIN, producing a horror of and hatred for it, He next begets the beginning of *hope*, which issues in an earnest and diligent seeking and inquiry, “What must I do to be saved?” Then it is that He who has come to earth to glorify Christ, presses upon that awakened soul the claims of His Lordship, set forth in such passages as Luke 14:26-33, and gives us to realize that Christ demands our hearts, lives, and all. Then it is He grants grace unto the quickened soul to *renounce* all other “lords,” *to turn away from* all “idols,” and to receive Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King.

And nothing but the sovereign and supernatural work of God the Spirit can bring this to pass. Surely this is self-evident. A preacher may induce a man to *believe* what Scripture says about his lost and undone condition, persuade him to “bow to” the divine verdict, and then “accept Christ as

his personal Savior.” No man wants to go to hell, and if he be intelligently assured that Christ stands ready as a fire escape, on the sole condition that he jump into His arms (“rest on His finished work”), thousands will do so. But a hundred preachers are unable to make an unregenerate person realize the unspeakably dreadful *nature of SIN*, make him feel that he has been a lifelong rebel against God, so change his heart that he now hates himself, and longs to please God, and serve Christ. Only God the Spirit can bring any man to the place where he is willing to forsake every idol, cut off a hindering right hand or pluck out an offending right eye, if so be that *Christ* will “receive” him! Ah, *a miracle* of grace has been wrought when we give up ourselves to the Lord (2Co 8:5) to be *ruled* by Him.

Ere closing, let us anticipate and remove an objection. Probably some are disposed to say in reply to what has been written above, “But the exhortations addressed to the saints in the New Testament epistles show that it is *Christians*, and *not* the unsaved, who are required to surrender to God and yield to Christ’s Lordship, Romans 12:1, etc. Such a mistake, now alas so commonly made, only serves to demonstrate the gross spiritual darkness which has enveloped even “orthodox” Christendom. The exhortations of the epistles simply signify that Christians are *to continue* AS they began, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus *the Lord*, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). All the exhortations of the New Testament may be summed up in two words, “*Come* to Christ,” “*Abide* in him,” and what is “abiding” but coming to Christ constantly, 1 Peter 2:4! The saints who were exhorted, as per Romans 12:1, had *already* been bidden to “yield” themselves “unto God” (Rom 6:13)! While we are left on earth, we shall *ever* need such admonitions. Proof of what we have said is found in Revelation 2. The backslidden church at Ephesus was told to “Repent, and do the *first* works” (v. 5)!

And now dear reader, a pointed question, Is Christ your Lord? Does He in deed and in truth occupy the throne of your heart? Does He actually *rule* your life? If not, then most certainly He is NOT your “Savior.” Unless your heart has been renewed, unless grace has changed you from a lawless rebel into a loving and loyal subject, then you are yet in your sins, on the broad road that leadeth to destruction. May it please God, in His sovereign grace, to speak loudly to some precious souls through this article.

## BITTERS AND SWEETS

Dear Brother: May mercy and peace be multiplied unto you, and may a covenant God bless you with abundance of His consolations, which are far better than the smiles of men. I have had wave upon wave, and billow upon billow since I saw you. I can assure you I did many times fear it was all over, that God had left me, that I should prove an apostate at last, and that all my prayers, groans, and fears were nothing but fleshly, and would all end in the flesh.

I understand you were at our house when my poor dear prodigal son set out on his last ramble, with the determination that he would never see T. again. When I came home from my journey and heard the particulars, had not the Lord given me a little help, I must have sunk. The old serpent set on me so unmercifully that I reeled to and fro like a drunken man, for I have laboured for this

dear child, particularly for the last four or five years, that God would prove him to be a vessel of mercy and now he was gone for the fourth time, with the determination that he would never see father or mother, sister or brother again, but would go across the seas. O how the devil did roar, "Where are your prayers now? Where is your hope now of his being a vessel of mercy? What do you think now of the promises which you have leaned on?" O how I staggered and my pangs of labour came on again, I believe ten times stronger than before.

My dear friend, the lad was in my very bowels and what could I do but travail in labour for him? I had four or five weeks' travail of soul before I could hear anything about him, except that he had passed on his way towards Exeter. I had but one prayer for him to God and that was that He would turn the devil out of his palace from reigning in his heart, and set up His own kingdom there and bring him home again, sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in his right mind. Here my soul was fixed, nor could I be moved from it. And sometimes my soul was in such wrestlings for this one blessing, that the devil might be dethroned out of his heart, my body has been so weak that I could scarcely crawl from one end of the room to the other. A few weeks before he sent me a letter, O what a conflict I had! It came to my mind that he was a vessel of wrath and this text ran through me like a dagger, "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." O how I staggered, and my very loins heaved up with pangs of grief! "What," cried I, "my dear child for whom I have travailed in such soul-trouble for five years, shall be destroyed, and that without remedy?" And then the devil presented him before my eyes, as having cut his throat, and being now in hell, where he must be tormented forever and ever.

O my friend, I can never tell you a thousandth part of what I passed through for about an hour. O what groans I poured out that God would direct me to some portion of His dear Word. "O Lord," I cried, "do send me a crumb, do let me pick up but a single crumb." In my poor, feeble confused state of mind, I took the blessed book of God and opened it upon the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, when the first five verses so overpowered me with wonder and glory at the greatness, power, majesty, mercy, and grace of the dear Redeemer, that I was obliged to cry out, "Is anything too hard for the LORD"? (Gen 18:14) But when I came to the sixth and seventh verses, I felt every string and bond break, and for a few minutes did not know whether the Lord was not breaking the pitcher at the fountain and taking my poor tempest-tossed devil-dragged soul into the heavenly port. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isa 11:6).

O my dear friend, bless God for His mercy. He smiled and whispered with His still small voice, "Thy prayers are heard, and come up before me. I will bring the leopard home, and he shall be heartily glad to lie down with the kids, and a little child shall lead them." O how I kissed the feet of my dear Lord! I washed them with my tears, and wiped them in my feelings with the hairs of my head. I blessed Him, praised Him, till my very body was so faint and feeble that I hardly knew for a few minutes whether I was in the body or out of it. I could not help shouting, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be light unto me."

In about a fortnight after this, my dear lad wrote me a letter to say that he was a soldier in Plymouth barracks, that he was in the very bowels of hell night and day, and that hell from beneath was moved for him to meet him at his coming. It was such a letter of contrition that I saw in a moment that the wolf was brought to dwell with the lamb and the leopard was willing to lie

down with the kid. Upon this I wrote to Mr. T. (though he was a perfect stranger personally to me), telling him all the circumstances and begging of him the favour to go to the barracks and see the lad, and then to let me know what he thought of him, whether he believed he was really brought to see the error of his ways and is heartily sick of them, and whether he thought it would be advisable for me to purchase his discharge or not.

I soon received a letter from Mr. T. and so full was it of feeling and sympathy with me in my trouble, and so good an account did it give of the lad, that it so broke and melted my soul into union with his soul that I felt as if we were one spirit. He said he believed there was a great change wrought in the lad's soul, that he was sick of his past life, and that therefore he considered it was my duty as his father, to get him out of his present situation. So I procured his discharge and he has been at home near a month, and never did I see, bless the Lord, a more visible change. How he longs to feed amongst the kids! God has already and still is sorely chastening him out of His law, and what a school that is! I believe in my very heart that the kingdom of God is set up in his soul, though he is still shut up unto the faith, which, I believe, will hereafter be revealed to his soul. Poor thing! He has had two or three crumbs since he came home and this makes him stick close under the table.

I have another testimony that sweets and bitters, emptyings and fillings, frowns and smiles, groans and songs, famishings and feastings, God has bound fast together and neither men nor devils shall break them asunder. It is through fire and water that we are brought into a wealthy place. Yet, blessed be my covenant God, not one hair of my head has been singed. Poor fool! When I was in the furnace, I expected sometimes to be completely consumed. Ah, my dear friend, if God had dwelt with me on the ground of *my* faith, where must I have sunk? Into the pit, never to rise more. But though we believe not, He abideth faithful—He cannot deny Himself, bless His holy name. “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him” (Psa 103:13) How sweet has that text been to me at times! But the devil has come again and torn asunder with rage, and told me that it did not belong to me. And I tell you what, it does not matter what God does for me, or however He may favour me, at times with His presence, if He leaves me to the devil and my own heart, I am disputing every bit of it. I find it just the same now as ever it was—flesh and blood are flesh and blood still, and the devil, unbelief, carnal reason, and all his devilish crew, are devilish still. And I find that faith, love, patience, meekness, watchfulness, and every spiritual grace, either in thought, word, or deed are all sovereign favours from God, and that not any one of them can ever be in exercise but as God the Holy Spirit draws it forth. I know that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and am a living witness that salvation, and salvations too, are all of grace. J. W., 1837—first published in the “Gospel Standard,” 1838.

## SPIRITUAL HELPLESSNESS

“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Pro 8:13). The “fear of the LORD” is one of the many names given to that new nature or principle of grace and holiness which is communicated to the Christian at his new birth. Evidence we *have* received this divine gift is that sin is now a burden and a grief to us. The longing of the renewed heart is to be completely done with sin, but this longing is only realized when we are called Home. Meanwhile, sooner or later, God makes the

real Christian learn by humbling experiences that he is without the least power of help from himself. It is easy to *say*, “I have no power,” but not so to actually realize the fact, and therefore does God allow *us* to try and overcome our secret lusts and besetting sins and to cast out our idols. We pray Him to help us and every fall we have are sorry for it, and are determined not to act so foolishly again, and we really expect we shall not.

But alas, Satan and sin work upon our native corruptions and with open eyes we go again and again into sin, and bring a heavy load of guilt upon our consciences. The “law” which Paul speaks of as being at work in his members (Rom 7:23) is nothing else than a love of sin. This is too strong for the Christian and though he seeks to be more diligent in reading, meditation, prayer, repenting, and believing, the victory he longs for comes not to him. Yea—we will not gloss over the solemn fact, but *honestly* acknowledge it—matters get worse and worse. We read the Word, but it seems to have no power over us. We pray, but it seems all in vain, for the more we pray against sin, the stronger it works and perhaps we go to the throne of grace with increasing reluctance. As for repentance, our hearts seem like stone, till perhaps we are ready to believe that God has given us up entirely.

Now all of this, and much more that might be said, is to teach us that we *are* altogether “without strength.” God Himself tells us that when the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots, then can those who are accustomed to do evil, do well (Jer 13:23), and we are brought to realize this in our experience. And how can we find it out in any other way, except by testing our own arm and discovering *our* supposed strength to be but weakness! But is this all? No, emptied of self, we are then ready to again find Christ a “very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1). Only those who are truly sin-sick apply in earnest to the great Physician of souls!



# July

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 8. The Holy Spirit and Christ: Part Two

We are afraid that our treatment of the particular aspect of this many-sided theme which is now before us is rather too abstruse for some of our readers to follow, yet we trust they will kindly bear with us as we endeavor to write for those who are anxious for help on the deeper things of God. As stated before, we are seeking to minister unto widely different classes, unto those with differing capacities, and therefore we wish to provide a varied spiritual menu. He who is hungry will not leave the table in disgust because one dish thereon appeals not to him. We believe the later articles of this series (D.V.) will be suited unto a much larger group of our friends. Meanwhile we ask their forbearance while we seek to give something like completeness to our exposition of the subject as a whole.

“As the humanity of Christ was assumed into the hypostatic union, we may fitly say, on the one hand, that *the Person of Christ* was anointed, so far as *the call to office* was concerned. While we bear in mind, on the other hand, that it is *the humanity* that is anointed in as far as we contemplate the actual supplies of God’s gifts and graces, aids and endowments, necessary for the execution of His office. But that we may not be engulfed in one-sidedness, it must be also added that the Holy Spirit, according to the order of the Trinity, interposes His power only to execute the will of the Son...As to the unction of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit, it was different according to the *three grades* successively imparted. The first grade was at the incarnation, the second coincided with His baptism, the third and highest grade was at the ascension, when He sat down on His mediatorial throne and received from the Father the gift of the Spirit to bestow upon His Church in abundant measure” (George Smeaton, 1814-1892).

We have already contemplated the *first* anointing of the Lord Jesus when, in His mother’s womb, His humanity was endowed with all spiritual graces and when through childhood and up to the age of thirty, He was illuminated, guided, and preserved by the immediate operations of the third Person in the Godhead. We come now to briefly consider His *second* anointing, when He was formally consecrated unto His public mission and divinely endowed for His official work. This took place at the river Jordan, when He was baptized by His forerunner. Then it was, while emerging from the waters, that the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in

the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father was heard testifying unto His infinite pleasure in His incarnate Son (Mat 3:16-17). All the references to that unique transaction call for close examination and prayerful study.

The first thing that is recorded after this is, “And Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (Luk 4:1). The reason why we are told this seems to be for the purpose of showing us that Christ’s humanity was confirmed by the Spirit and made victorious over the devil by His power. Hence it is we read that, right after the temptation, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee” (Luk 4:14). Next we are told that He entered the synagogue at Nazareth and read from Isaiah 61, “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the LORD,” and declared, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luk 4:18-19, 21).

Here, then, is to be seen the leading distinction between the first and second “grades” of Christ’s “unction” from the Spirit. The first was for the forming of His human nature and the enduing it with perfect wisdom and faultless holiness. The second was to endow Him with supernatural powers for His great work. Thus the former was personal and private, the latter official and public. The one was bestowing upon Him of spiritual graces, the other imparting to Him ministerial gifts. His *need* for this double “anointing” lay in the creature-nature He had assumed and the servant-place which He had taken, and also as a public attestation from the Father of His acceptance of Christ’s person and His induction into His mediatorial office. Thus was fulfilled that ancient oracle, “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding” (Isa 11:2-3).

“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (Joh 3:34). This at once brings out the pre-eminence of Christ, for *He* received the Spirit as no mere man could. Observe the contrast pointed by Ephesians 4:7, “But unto every one of us is given grace *according to the measure* of the gift of Christ.” In none but the Mediator did “all the fullness of the Godhead” dwell “bodily” (Col 2:9). The uniqueness of the Spirit’s relation to our Lord comes out again in Romans 8:2, “For the law of the Spirit of life *in Christ Jesus* hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Note carefully the words we have italicized. Not only does this statement reveal to us the source of all Christ’s actions, but it intimates that more habitual grace dwells in Him than in all created beings.

The third degree of Christ’s unction was reserved for His exaltation and is thus described, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Act 2:33). This highest grade of unction, when Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness *above* His fellows (Psa 45:7), and which became apparent at Pentecost, was an ascension-gift. The declaration which Peter gave of it was but a paraphrase of Psalm 68:18, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.” That bountiful supply of the Spirit was designed for the erecting and equipping of the New Testament Church and it was fitly bestowed after the ascension upon those for whom the Spirit was purchased.

As Mediator, the Lord Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit for the execution of *all His* offices and for the performance of all His mediatorial work. *His right to send* the Spirit into the hearts of fallen men was acquired by His atonement. It was the well-earned *reward* of all His toil



and sufferings. One of the chief results of the perfect satisfaction which Christ offered to God on behalf of His people was His right to now bestow the Spirit upon them. Of old it was promised Him, “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death” (Isa 53:11-12). So too, His forerunner had announced, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire” (Mat 3:11).

What has just been said above is further borne out by Galatians 3:13-14, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” The promised Spirit followed the great work of canceling the curse as the effect follows the cause. To give the *Holy Spirit* to men clearly implied that their sins had been put away, see Leviticus 14:14, 17 for the type of this—the “oil” [emblem of the Spirit] placed *upon* the “blood”! Not only does Christ’s right to bestow the Holy Spirit upon His redeemed intimate the cancellation of their sins, but it also clearly argues His *divine* dignity, for no mere *Servant*, however exalted his station, could act thus or confer such a gift!

From the varied quotations which have been made from Scripture in reference to Christ’s unction for all His offices, it sometimes appears as if He were in the subordinate position of needing direction, aid, and miraculous power for the purposes of His mission (Isa. 11:1-3; 61:1-2, e.g.). At other times, He is said to *have* the Spirit (Rev 3:1), to *give* the Spirit (Act 2:33), to *send* the Spirit (Joh 15:26), as if the Spirit’s operations were subordinated to the Son. But all difficulty is removed when we perceive, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that there was a *conjoined* mission in which the Son and the Spirit act together for the salvation of God’s elect. The Son effected redemption—the Spirit reveals and applies it to all for whom it was purchased.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 68. The Faith of Jacob (11:21)

It has been well said that, “Though the grace of faith is of universal use throughout our whole lives, yet it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has its great work to do at the last, to help believers to finish well, to die to the Lord, so as to honour Him, by patience, hope and joy, so as to leave a witness behind them of the truth of God’s Word and the excellency of His ways, for the conviction and establishment of all that attend them in their dying moments” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). God is greatly glorified when His people leave this world with their flag flying at full mast. When the spirit triumphs over the flesh, when the world is consciously and gladly left behind for heaven. For this, *faith* must be in exercise.

It is not without good reason, we may be sure, that in the description which the Holy Spirit has given us of the life of faith in Hebrews 11, He has furnished us with no less than three examples—and these in successive verses—of the actings of faith in the final crisis and conflict.

We believe that, among other reasons, God would hereby assure His trembling and doubting children that He, who has begun a good work in them, will most certainly sustain and complete the same. That He, who has in His sovereignty committed this precious grace to their hearts, will not suffer it to languish when its support is most sorely needed. That He, who has enabled His people to exercise faith during the vigor of life, will not withdraw His quickening power during the weakness of death.

As the writer grows older, he is saddened by discovering how very little is now being given out, either orally or in written ministry, for the instruction and comfort of God's people concerning the dying of Christians. The devil is not inactive in seeking to strike terror into the hearts of God's people, and knowing this, it is the bounden duty of Christ's servants to expose the groundlessness and hollowness of Satan's lies. Not a few have been deterred from so doing by heeding the mistaken notion that for a Christian to think of and prepare for death is dishonouring to Christ and inconsistent with the "imminency" of His coming. But such a notion is refuted in our present passage. Let it be carefully considered that, when in Hebrews 12:1, the Holy Spirit bids *us* "run with patience the race that is set before us," He bases that exhortation on the fact that we are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," (Heb 12:1) the reference being unto the men of God who are before in Hebrews 11, who all "*died in faith*" (v. 13).

A God-given and God-sustained faith is not only sufficient to enable the feeblest saint to overcome the solicitations of the flesh, the attractions of the world, and the temptations of Satan, but it is also able to give him a triumphant passage through death. This is one of the prominent things set forth in this wondrous and blessed chapter. In Hebrews 11, the Holy Spirit has set out at length the works, the achievements, the fruits, the glories of faith, and not the least of them is its power to support the soul, comfort the heart, illuminate the understanding, and direct the will in the last earthly struggle. While Hebrews 11:20, 21, and 22 have this in common, yet each contributes its own distinctive feature. In the case of Isaac, we see a dying faith triumphing over the affections of the flesh. In the case of Jacob, dying faith overcoming the interference of man, and in Joseph, scorning the worthless pageantry of the world.

Of old Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Num 23:10)! Well might he wish to do so. The writer has not a shadow of a doubt that every Christian who has, in the main current of his life, walked with God, his last hours on earth (normally speaking, for we consider not here the exceptional cases of those taken home suddenly) are the brightest and most blissful of all. Proverbs 4:18, of itself, is fully sufficient to warrant this thought. The Christian is not always permitted to bear testimony of this so as to be intelligent unto those surrounding him, but even though his poor body be convulsed with pain and physical unconsciousness set in, yet the soul cutting adrift from its earthly moorings is then blest with a sight and sense of his precious Redeemer such as he never had before (Act 7:55).

"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa 37:37). A peaceful death has concluded the troublous life of many a good man. As the late C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) said on this verse, "With believers it may rain in the morning, thunder at midday, and pour torrents in the afternoon, but it must clear up ere the sun go down." Most aptly do his words apply to the case of Jacob. A stormy passage indeed was his, but the waters were smooth as he entered the port. Cloudy and dark were many of the hours of his life, but the sunset bathed it with radiant splendor at its close.

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying" (Heb 11:21). Ah, but to "die" by faith, we must needs live by faith. And a life of faith is not like the shining of the sun on a calm and clear day, its rays meeting with no resistance from the atmosphere. Rather is it more like the sun rising upon a

foggy morning, its rays struggling to pierce through and dispel the opposing mists. Jacob walked by faith, but the exercise thereof encountered many a struggle, and had to fight hard for each victory. In spite of all his faults and failings (and each of us is just as full of the same), Jacob dearly prized his interest in the everlasting covenant, trusted in God, and highly esteemed His promises. It is a very faulty and one-sided estimate of his character which fails to take these things into account. The old nature was strong within him, yes, and so too was the new.

Though his infirmities led Jacob to employ unlawful means for the procuring of it, yet his heart *valued* the “birthright,” which profane Esau despised (Gen 25). Though he yielded unto the foolish suggestions of his mother to deceive Isaac, yet his faith covetly eyed the promises of God. Though there may have been a measure of fleshly bargaining in his vow, yet Jacob was anxious for the Lord to be his God (Gen 28:21). Though he stole away from Laban in fear, when his father-in-law overtook him, he glorified God in the tribute he paid Him (Gen 31:54). Though he was terrified at Esau, nevertheless, he sought unto the Lord, pleaded His promises (Gen 32:12), and obtained an answer of peace. Though later he groveled at the feet of his brother, in the sequel we find him prevailing with God (Gen 32:28). Equally with Abraham and Isaac, “by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles” (Heb 11:9).

But it was during the closing days of his life that Jacob’s faith shone most brightly. When giving permission for Benjamin to accompany his other sons on their second trip to Egypt, he said, “God Almighty [or “God the Sufficient One”] give you mercy before the man” (Gen 43:14). This was the title under which the Lord had blessed Abraham (Gen 17:1), as it was also the one Isaac employed when he blessed Jacob (Gen 28:3). Thus in using it here, we see how Jacob rested on the covenant promise. Arriving in Egypt, the aged patriarch was presented unto its mighty monarch. Blessed is it to see how he conducted himself. Instead of cringing before the ruler of the greatest empire of the old world, we are told that “Jacob blessed Pharaoh” (Gen 47:7). With becoming dignity, he conducted himself as a child of the King of kings (Heb 7:7) and carried himself as became an ambassador of the Most High.

“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph” (Heb 11:21). This takes us back to what is recorded in Genesis 48. What is found there is quite distinct from what is said in the next chapter, where Jacob is seen as God’s prophet announcing the future of all his twelve sons. But here he is concerned only with Joseph and his two sons. Before considering the particular detail which our text treats of, let us note the sentence which immediately precedes it. “And he blessed Joseph” (Gen 48:15). In this we may admire the overruling hand of God and also find here the key to what follows.

In Deuteronomy 21:17, we read, “But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.” It was the right of the firstborn to have a double portion, and this is exactly what we find Jacob bestowing upon Joseph, for both Ephraim and Manasseh were allotted a distinct tribal part and place in the promised inheritance. This, by right, belonged unto Joseph, though the devil had tried to cheat him out of it, using Laban to deceive Jacob by substituting Leah in Rebekah’s place, and Joseph was *her* firstborn. And now by the providence of God the primogeniture is restored to him. So too God permitted Reuben to sin so that the way might be open for this, “Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph)” (1Ch 5:1).

Earlier in this interview, Jacob had said, “And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are mine*”

(Gen 48:5). Those two sons of Joseph had been borne to him by an Egyptian wife and in a foreign land, but now they were to be adopted and incorporated into the body of the holy seed. For note, when Jacob blessed them he said, “The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac” (Gen 48:16). By that blessing, he sought to draw their hearts away from Egypt and their kinfolk there that they might be annexed to the church and share with the people of God.

“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph” (Heb 11:21) In this case, the Revised Version is more accurate, “blessed *each* of the sons of Joseph,” for their blessing was not collective, but a distinctive and discriminating one. In fact, the leading feature of the dying Jacob’s faith is most particularly to be seen at this very point. When Joseph brought his two sons before their grandfather to receive his patriarchal blessing, he placed Manasseh, the elder, to his right hand and Ephraim, the younger, to his left. His object in this was that Manasseh might receive the first and superior portion. Right there it was that the faith of Jacob was most tested. At this time Joseph was governor over all Egypt and second only to Pharaoh himself in authority and power. Moreover he was Jacob’s favorite son, yet the dying patriarch had now to withstand him.

“And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn” (Gen 48:14). Herein we behold *the manner* in which the blessing was bestowed. Once more the younger, by the appointment of God, was preferred before the elder, for the Lord distributes His favors as He pleases, saying “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” (Mat 20:15). Unto the high sovereignty of God Jacob here submissively bowed. It was not a thing of chance that he crossed his hands, for the Hebrew of “guiding his hands wittingly” is “made his hands to understand.” It was the understanding of faith, for his physical eyes were too dim to see what he was doing—true faith is ever opposed to sight!

“And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk” (Gen 48:15). Very blessed is this. Despite his physical decay, there was no abatement of his spiritual strength. Notwithstanding the weakness of old age, he abode firm in faith and in the vigorous exercise of it. Here in the verse before us, we behold Jacob recognizing and asserting the covenant which Jehovah had made with his fathers. This is the very life of faith—to lay hold of, draw strength from, and walk in the light of the everlasting covenant, for it is the foundation of all our blessings, the charter of our inheritance, the guaranty of our eternal glory and bliss. He who keeps it in view will have a happy deathbed, a peaceful end, and a God-honouring exit from this world of sin and suffering.

“The God which fed me all my life long unto this day” (Gen 48:15). As Jacob had made a solemn acknowledgment of the spiritual blessings which he had received by virtue of the everlasting covenant, so he also owned the temporal mercies of which he had been the favored recipient. “It was a work of faith to retain a precious thankful remembrance of divine providence in a constant provision of all needful temporal supplies, from first to last, during the whole course of his life” (John Owen, 1616-1683). As it is an act of faith to cordially consent unto the dealings of God with us in a providential way, so it is a fruit of faith to make a confession by the mouth concerning Him. Note: God is honoured before those attending him when a dying saint bears testimony unto His faithfulness in having supplied all his need.

“The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads” (Gen 48:16). “He reflects on all the hazards, trials, and evils that befell him, and the exercise of his faith in them all. Now all his dangers were past, all his evils conquered, all his fears removed, he retains by faith a sense of the

goodness and kindness of God in rescuing him out of them all” (John Owen). “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee” (Deu 8:2). As the children of Israel were called upon to do this at the close of their wilderness journey, so we cannot be more profitably employed in the closing hours of our earthly pilgrimage than by recalling and reviewing that grace which delivered us from so many dangers known and unknown.

“And let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (Gen 48:16). Jacob was not ambitious for a continuance of their present greatness in Egypt, but desired for them the blessings of the covenant. Joseph could have left to his sons a rich patrimony in Egypt, but he brought them to Jacob to receive his benediction. Ah, the baubles of this world are nothing in comparison with the blessings of Zion, see Psalm 128:5; 134:3; 133:3. The spiritual blessings of the Redeemer far exceed in value the temporal mercies of the Creator. It was the former which Joseph coveted for his sons and which Jacob now prophetically bestowed.

“And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father’s hand, to remove it from Ephraim’s head unto Manasseh’s head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon *his* head (Gen. 48:17-18). Here we see the will of man asserting itself, which, when left to itself, is ever opposed to God. Joseph had *his* wishes concerning the matter and did not hesitate to express them, though, be it noted unto his credit, he meekly acquiesced at the finish.

“And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it” (Gen 48:19). It was at *this* point that Jacob’s faith shone most brightly. The repeated “*I know it*” marks the great strength of his faith. He had “heard” from God (Rom 10:17), he believed God, he submitted to God. Jacob was no more to be influenced by “the will of man” here, than in the preceding verse Joseph was by “the will of the flesh.” Faith overcame both. Learn, my reader, that sometimes faith has to cross the wish and will of a loved one!

Plainly it was “by faith” that the dying Israel blessed each of the sons of Joseph. Certainly it was not by sight. “To ‘sight’ what could be more unlikely than that these two young Egyptian princes, for such they were, should ever forsake Egypt, the land of their birth, and migrate into Canaan? What more improbable than that they should ‘each’ become a separate tribe? What more unlooked for than that, of these two, the younger should be exalted above the elder, both in importance and number?” (E.W. Bullinger, 1837-1913)

“He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations” (Gen 48:19). Not only does God make a great difference between the elect and the reprobate, but He does not deal alike with His own children, neither in temporals nor spirituals. There are some of His favored people to whom God manifests Himself more familiarly, grants them more liberal supplies of His grace, and more plentiful comforts. There was a specially favored three among the twelve apostles. Some Christians have more opportunities to glorify God than others, higher privileges of service, greater abilities and gifts—the “talents” were not distributed equally, one had five, another three, another one. But let us not murmur. All have more than they can improve.

“And worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff” (Heb 11:21). There is some room for question as to what incident the apostle is here referring to. Some think that (like Moses did “exceedingly fear and quake,” Heb 12:21) it is entirely a New Testament revelation. Others (the writer included) regard it as alluding to what is recorded in Genesis 47:31. The only difficulty in connection with this view is that here we read Jacob “worshipped upon the top of his staff,” there

that he “bowed himself upon the bed’s head.” Concerning this variation, we agree with Owen that “he did *both*, namely bow towards the head of the bed, and at the same time lean on his staff, as we are assured by comparing the divine writers together.”

The occasion of Jacob’s “worship” was as follows, “And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said” (Gen 47:29-30). It was far more than a sentimental whim which moved the patriarch to desire that his body be interred in the holy land. It was the working of faith, a blessed exhibition of his confidence in God.

It was not the pomp and pageantry of his burial which concerned Jacob, but *the place* of it which he was so solicitous about. Not in Egypt among idolaters, must his bones be laid to rest, for with them he cared not to have any fellowship in life, and now he desired no proximity unto them in death—he would show that God’s people are a *separated* people. No, it was in the burying place of his fathers he wished to be laid. First, to show forth his union with Abraham and Isaac in the covenant. Second, to express his faith in the promises of God, which concerned Canaan and not Egypt. Third, to draw off the minds of his descendants from a continuance in Egypt—setting before them an example that *they* should think of returning to the promised land at the proper time, and thereby confirming them in the belief of possessing it. Fourth, to signify he would go before them, and as it were, take possession of the land on their behalf. Fifth, to intimate that Canaan was a type of heaven, the “better country” (Heb 11:16), the eternal resting place of all the people of God.

The asking of Joseph to place his hand under his thigh was a gesture in swearing (Gen 24:2-3), as the raising of the hand now is with us. It was not that Jacob doubted his son’s veracity, but it signified the eagerness of his entreaty and the intensity of his mind about the matter. What an important thing it was to him. No doubt it was also designed to forestall any objection which Pharaoh might make after his death, see Genesis 50:5-6. Jacob was in bed at the time, but gathering together his little remaining strength, he raised himself to sit upright, and then bowing his body, and so that it might be supported, he leaned upon his staff, worshipping God.

The Holy Spirit’s mention here of Jacob’s reverent gesture in worshipping God, intimates to us that it well becomes a worshipper of the Most High to manifest the inward devotion of the soul by a fitting posture of the body. God has redeemed both and He is to be honoured by both, 1 Corinthians 6:20. Shall we serve God with that which costs us nothing? Sitting or lying at prayer savors more of sloth and carelessness, than of reverence and zeal. Carnal men, in pursuit of their fleshly lusts, can weary and waste the body. Shall Christians shelter behind every inconvenience and excuse? Christ exposed His body to the utmost suffering, shall not His love constrain us to deny selfish ease and sloth!

Having secured the promise from Joseph that his will should be carried out, Jacob bowed before God in worship, for now he realized the Lord was making good the promise recorded in Genesis 46:4. In his great weakness, he had bowed toward his bed’s head so as to adore God, completing now his representation of reverence and faith by leaning upon the top of his staff. In that emblematic action he signified his complete dependence upon God, testified to his condition as a pilgrim in the earth, and emphasized his weariness of the world and his readiness to part from it. He praised God for all He had done for him and for the approaching prospect of everlasting bliss. Blessed is it to find that the Holy Spirit’s final word about Jacob in Scripture (Heb 11:21) depicts him in the act of *worship*!

# THE LIFE OF DAVID

## 20. His Chastening

Some of our readers may wonder why we have given to the present article such a title and what bearing it has upon the contents of 1 Samuel 26. If so, we would ask them to thoughtfully ponder the closing verses of the preceding chapter. Much is lost by many readers of the Bible through failing to observe the connection between the ending of one chapter and the beginning of another. Even when incidents which are totally distinct and different follow each other, a spiritual eye may often discern an intimate moral relation between them and therein many valuable lessons may be learned. Such is the case here. At first glance there appears to be no logical link uniting the further uncalled-for attack of Saul upon David and his having taken unto himself a wife a little before, but the two things *are* related as is effect to cause and here is to be found the key which opens to us the divine significance of what is now to be before us.

“The way of transgressors is hard” (Pro 13:15). No doubt the primary reference in these words is to the wicked, yet the principle of them unquestionably holds good in the case of the redeemed. In the keeping of God’s commandments there is “great reward” (Psa 19:11), in this life (1Ti 4:8) as well as in that which is to come, but in the breaking of God’s commandments bitter chastening is sure to follow. Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace (Pro 3:17), but he who departs from Wisdom’s ways and follows a course of self-will, must expect to smart for it. So it was now in the experience of David. It is true that in the case of marital infidelity the Mosaic law permitted the innocent one to obtain a divorce and marry again, but it made no provision for a plurality of wives and *that* was what David was now guilty of, and for his sin he was sorely chastised.

Ah, my reader, let this truth sink deeply into thine heart—God is exercising a moral government over the saved as well as the unsaved and He will no more wink at the sins of the one than He will of the other. David was saved by grace through faith apart from any good works as the meritorious cause, as truly as we are, but he was also called to be holy in all manner of conversation or behavior, as we are. Grace does not set aside the requirements of divine holiness, instead, it reigns “Through righteousness” (Rom 5:21). And when one who has been saved by grace fails to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” (Ti 2:12), then the chastening rod of God falls upon him that he may be a “partaker of his holiness” (Heb 12:10). And this, be it noted, is not only a part of the Father’s dealings with His *children*, but it is also a part of His ways with His *subjects* as the Moral Ruler of this world.

As we suggested in the seventh article of this series, it was David’s being united in marriage to the unbelieving Michal, which accounts for the painful experiences he passed through while a member of Saul’s household. Trials do not come upon us haphazardly, they come from the hand

of God. Nor does He act capriciously, but according to the righteous principles of His government. In an earlier chapter, we saw how that God graciously protected David when the devil-driven king sought his life and how that he moved him to return home. Why, then, should His restraining hand be removed and Saul allowed to go forth again on a bloodthirsty mission? Why should the brief respite David had enjoyed now be so rudely broken? The answer is that God was again using his enemy to chasten David for his recent sin, that he might, by painful experience, learn anew that the way of transgressors *is* hard.

“O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (Isa 48:18). What a difference it makes whether the ways of a Christian please or displease the Ruler of this world. It is the difference of having God *for* or having Him *against* us—not in the absolute sense, not in the eternal sense, but in His *governmental* dealings with us. When the heart be right with God, then He shows Himself strong on our behalf (2Ch 16:9). When our ways please Him, then He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us (Pro 16:7). Then how diligently should we guard our hearts and ponder the path of our feet (Pro 4:23, 26). Carelessness invites disaster. Disobedience ensures chastening. Sinning will withhold good things from us (Jer 5:25).

It is very important to see that while the penal and eternal consequences of the Christian’s sins have been remitted by God, because atoned for by Christ, yet the disciplinary and temporal effects thereof are not cancelled—otherwise the saints would never be sick or die. It is not God in His absolute character, acting according to His ineffably holy nature, but God in His official character, acting according to the principles of His righteous government, which deals with the present conduct of His people, rewarding them for their obedience, and chastening for disobedience. Hence, when God makes use of the devil and his agents to scourge His people, it is not unto their ultimate destruction, but unto their present plaguing and disciplining. And this is exactly what we see in our present lesson. Saul was allowed to disturb David’s rest, but not to take his life. In like manner, the devil is often permitted to whip us, but never to devour us.

“And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?” (1Sa 26:1). The reader may remember that the Ziphites had shown themselves unfriendly towards David on a former occasion. Was it not then a hazardous thing for him to return unto those parts? How are we to account for his acting so injudiciously and thus courting danger? Ah, let us recall what was pointed out under 1 Samuel 21:1 in article 8. When the soul is out of touch with God, when fellowship with Him has been broken by giving way to the lusts of the flesh, the judgment is dulled and imprudent conduct is sure to be the effect. It is not without reason that godliness is so often designated “wisdom” (e.g. Psa 90:12) and that a course of evildoing is termed “folly.”

David had acted imprudently in marrying Abigail. He had committed a grave sin in taking unto wife Ahinoam. We say he had acted “imprudently” in marrying Abigail. The *time* was not propitious for that. He was then a homeless wanderer, in no condition to give unto a wife the care and devotion to which she is entitled. Holy Scripture declares, “To everything there is a season” (Ecc 3:1). While on this point, let it be said that, in the judgment of the writer, young men who are out of work and have no good prospects of soon obtaining any, are acting imprudently, yea, rashly, in getting married. Let them possess their souls in patience (Luk 21:19) and wait a more favorable season, and not tempt God. So too those in straitened circumstances who continue having an increase in their families are imprudent, nay, disobeying 1 Corinthians 7:29. These are days for practicing *self-denial*.



“And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?” (1Sa 26:1). If we venture upon the enemy’s territory we must expect to be harassed by him. It is probable these Ziphites were fearful that should David succeed Saul on the throne, then he would avenge himself upon them for their previous perfidy. If so, they were now the more anxious that he should be captured and slain. Afraid to tackle him themselves, they sent word to the king of David’s present whereabouts. Their message presented a temptation for Saul to return again unto that evil course which he had abandoned, temporarily at least. Thus does one evil-doer encourage another in wickedness.

“Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph” (1Sa 26:2). Poor Saul, his goodness was a morning cloud and as the early dew it vanished away. “How soon do unsanctified hearts lose the good impressions which their convictions have made upon them and return with the dog to their vomit” (Matthew Henry). O what need has even the Christian to pray earnestly unto God, that since he still has so much of the tinder of corruption left within, the sparks of temptation may be kept far from him, lest when they come together they are “set on fire of hell” (Jam 3:6). The providential restraint of God in causing Saul to leave off pursuing David because the Philistines were invading his territory, had wrought no change *within* him. His evil disposition towards God’s anointed was the same as ever and now that the favorable opportunity to seize David presented itself, he gladly made the most of it.

The action of Saul here provides a solemn illustration of a well-known principle—if sin be not dethroned and mortified, it will soon recover its strength, and when a suitable temptation is presented, break out again with renewed force. How often do the servants of God witness souls under deep conviction, followed by a marked reformation, which leads them to believe that a genuine work of grace has taken place within them, only to see them, a little later, return to their sins and become worse than ever. So here. Upon receiving word from the Ziphites, Saul’s enmity and malice revived and like Pharaoh of old, he again hardened his heart and determined to make another effort to remove his rival. And thus it is with many a one who has been sobered and awed by the Word. After a brief season, Satan and his agents suggest such thoughts as tend to rekindle the smothered flame, and then the lusts of the flesh are again allowed free play. O my reader, beg God to *deepen* your convictions and write His law on your heart.

“And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed” (1Sa 26:3-4). “David neither fled, nor went out to meet Saul, when he was fully certified that he was actually come forth to destroy him! Had a much greater army of uncircumcised Philistines marched against him, he would doubtless have faced them with his small company, and trusted in God for the event, but he would not fight against the ‘Lord’s anointed’” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

“David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed” (1Sa 26:4). From the previous verse it would seem David had perceived that some large force was advancing into that part of the country where he and his men were now quartered. Though not certain as to who was at the head of the approaching army, he probably suspected that it was none other than Saul and therefore did he now send out spies to make sure. He would not fully believe that the king had again dealt so basely with him, till he had the clearest proof of it. Thereby does he set us an example not to believe the worst of our enemies till we are really forced to do so by incontestable evidence.

“And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him” (1Sa 26:5). Most likely it was in the dusk of the evening that David now went forward to reconnoiter, surveying from close range the order of Saul’s camp, and the strength of its entrenchments. Though he knew the Lord was his Protector, yet he deemed it necessary to be upon his guard and make use of means for his safety. Well for us when we act as wisely as serpents, but as harmless as doves. It is to be noted that David did not entrust this critical task unto any of his underlings, but performed it in person. The leader ought always to take the lead in the most difficult and dangerous tasks.

“Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee” (1Sa 26:6). David now addressed himself unto two of those who were, most likely, his closest attendants, asking who was bold enough to volunteer in accompanying him on an exceedingly dangerous enterprise—that of two men entering a camp of three thousand soldiers. There is little room for doubt that David was prompted by the Spirit to act thus, from whom he probably received assurance of divine protection. Thereby he would be afforded another opportunity of demonstrating to Saul and Israel his innocence. Ahimelech was probably a proselyted Hittite, and not having that faith in the God of Israel which such a severe testing called for, held back. But Abishai, who was David’s own nephew (1Ch 2:15-16), readily agreed to accompany David.

“So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him” (1Sa 25:7). What an extraordinary situation now presented itself before the eyes of David and his lone companion! Had the watchmen failed at their point of duty? There was none to sound an alarm. The entire camp was wrapped in slumber so profound that, though the two uninvited visitors walked and talked in their midst, none was aroused. Ah, how easily can *God* render impotent an entire host of enemies! All the forces of nature are under His immediate control. He can awaken from the sleep of death and He can put the living into such a heavy sleep that none can awaken them. There was Saul and all his forces as helpless as though they were in fetters of iron.

“Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time” (1Sa 26:8). In view of what had transpired in the cave (1Sa 24:4-6), no doubt Abishai thought that though David scrupled to kill Saul with his own hand, yet he would allow one of his officers to slay him. Thus would an end be put to the difficulties and dangers unto himself and his adherents, by cutting off at one blow their inveterate prosecutor. The more so, since Providence had again placed Saul in their power, apparently for this very purpose. This illustrates the fact that often it requires as much godly resolution to restrain the excesses of zealous, but unspiritual friends, as it does to stand firm against the rage of incensed enemies.

A powerful temptation was here set before David. Had their positions been reversed, would Saul hesitate to slay him? Why, then, should David allow sentiment to prevail? Moreover, did it not look as though *God* had arranged things to this very end? The previous opportunity was not nearly so strongly marked as this one. Saul had, as it were, accidentally wandered into the cave, but here was something extraordinary—the entire camp was wrapped in a supernatural slumber. Furthermore, his attendant urges upon him that it *was* the will of God to now take things into his own hand. But David was not to be moved from his loyalty to the throne. First, he told Abishai

that it would be *sinful* to lay violent hands upon one whose person was sacred (v. 10), for Saul had been appointed by God and anointed for his office. Second, he declared it *was unnecessary*. God would sooner or later cut him off (vv. 10-11). Remembering how the Lord had just before smitten Nabal, he left it to Him to avenge his cause.

“So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul’s bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them” (1Sa 26:12). Here we see David as a type of Christ in His wonderful forbearance toward His enemies and in His faith in God, 1 Peter 2:23. David’s procedure was an effective method of convincing Saul that he *could* have slain him. And what a proof to the king that the Lord had departed from him and was protecting David! “Thus do we lose our strength and comfort when we are careless and secure, and off our watch” (Matthew Henry), gives the practical lesson for us in Saul’s losing his spear and cruse of water.

# HEART WORK

## Part Two

“Do you think you came into this world to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, unto the satisfaction of the will of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk unprofitably—it may be corruptly—in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough time to live unto God, in the very essentials of that life? Alas, you came into the world under this law, ‘It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment’ (Heb 9:27), and the end [purpose] why your life is here granted unto you, is that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the principal part of your time be not improved with respect unto this end, you will yet fall under the sentence of it unto eternity” (John Owen, 1670).

Multitudes seem to be running, but few “pressing toward the mark.” Many talk about salvation, but few experience the joy of it. There is much of the form of godliness, but little of the power of it. O how rare it is to find any who know anything experimentally of the power that separates from the world, delivers from self, defends from Satan, makes sin to be hated, Christ to be loved, truth to be prized, and error and evil to be departed from. Where shall we find those who are denying self, taking up their cross daily, and following Christ in the path of obedience? Where are they who hail reproach, welcome shame, and endure persecution? Where are they who are truly getting prayer *answered* daily, on whose behalf God is showing Himself strong? Something is radically wrong somewhere. Yes, and as surely as the beating of the pulse is an index to the state of our most vital physical organ, so the lives of professing Christians make it unmistakably evident that their *hearts* are diseased!

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2Ch 16:9). Ah, do not the opening

words indicate that those with “perfect” hearts are few and far between, that they are hard to locate? Surely it does, and it has ever been the case. David cried, “Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa 12:1). The Lord Jesus had to lament, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought” (Isa 49:4). The apostle Paul declared, “I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Phi 2:20-21). “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me” (2Ti 1:15). And things are neither better nor worse today. But, my reader, instead of talking about the “apostasy of Christendom,” instead of being occupied with the empty profession all around us, what about our own hearts? Is *your* heart “perfect”? If so, even in these so-called “hard times” God is “showing Himself strong” in thy behalf, that is, He is working miracles for you and ministering to you in a way that He is not to the empty professors. But if God is not so doing, then *your* heart is *not* “perfect” toward Him and it is high time for you to take stock and get down to serious soul business.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). The pains which multitudes have taken in religion are but lost labour. Like the Pharisees of old, they have been tithing anise and mint and cummin, but neglecting the weightier matters. Many have a zeal, but it is not according to knowledge. They are active, but their energies are misdirected. They have wrought “many wonderful works” (Mat 7:22), but they are rejected of God. Why? Because their employments are self-selected or man-appointed, while the one great task which God has assigned is left unattended to. All outward actions are worthless while our hearts be not right with God. He will not so much as hear our prayers while we regard iniquity in our hearts (Psa 66:18)! Let us, then, endeavor to further point out what is signified by this supremely important exhortation.

To “keep” the heart signifies *to have the conscience exercised about all things*. In numbers of passages, “heart” and “conscience” signify one and the same thing, see 1 Samuel 24:5; 2 Samuel 24:10; 1 John 3:21, etc. The apostle Paul declared, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16), and herein he sets before us an example which we need to emulate. After the most careful and diligent manner, we must strive to keep the conscience free from all offense in the discharge of every duty that God requires and in rendering to every man what is due him. Though this is never perfectly attained in this life, yet every regenerate soul has a real concern for such a state of conscience. A “good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly” (He. 13:18) is worth far more than rubies.

This is to be something more than an empty wish, which gets us nowhere. The apostle said, “Herein do I *exercise* myself” (Act 24:16). It was a matter of deep concern to him and one to which he assiduously applied himself. He laboured hard in seeing to it that his conscience did not flatter, deceiving and misleading him. He was conscientious over both his outer and inner life, so that his conscience accused and condemned him not. He was more careful not to offend his conscience than he was not to displease his dearest friend. He made it his daily business to live by this rule, abstaining from many a thing which natural inclination drew him unto, and performing many a duty which the ease-loving flesh would shirk. He steadily maintained a care not to break the law of love toward either God or man. And when conscious of failure, he saw to it that by renewed acts of repentance and faith (in confession) each offense was removed from his conscience, instead of allowing guilt to accumulate thereon.

“Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1Ti 1:5). The “commandment” is the same as the “holy commandment” of 2 Peter 2:21, namely, the Gospel, as including the moral law, which enjoined

perfect love both to God and to our neighbour. The “end” or design—that which is enjoined and whose accomplishment is prompted thereby—is *love*. But spiritual “love” can only proceed from “a pure heart,” that is, one which has been renewed by grace and thereby delivered from enmity against God (Rom 8:7) and hatred against man (Ti 3:3), and cleansed from the love and pollution of sin. Spiritual “love” can only proceed out of a “good conscience,” that is, a conscience which has been made tender and active by grace, which has been purged by the blood of Christ, and which sedulously avoids all that defiles it and draws away from God. Its possessor being influenced to act conscientiously in the whole of his conduct. It is solemn to note that those who “put away” a good conscience soon make shipwreck of the faith (1Ti 1:19).

To “keep” the heart means to “*set the Lord always before*” us (Psa 16:8). Some may object that those words spoke, prophetically, of the Lord Jesus. True, but remember He has left us an example *that we should follow* his steps (1Pe 2:21). What, then, is it to “set the Lord always before” us? It means to remember that His eye is ever upon us and that we act accordingly. It means to remember that we must yet render to Him a full account of our stewardship and to let this fact constantly influence us. It means that we are to ever have *His* honour and glory in view, living not to please ourselves, but acting according to His revealed will. It means that we should strive, especially, to have *God* before our souls whenever we engage in any religious exercises. The Omniscient One will not be imposed upon by outward forms or empty words. They who worship Him “*must* worship him in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:24). “Seek ye my face,” O to respond with David, “*My heart* said unto thee, thy face, LORD, will I seek” (Psa 27:8).

“The well is seldom so full that water will at first pumping flow forth, neither is the heart commonly so spiritual—even after our best care in our worldly converse—as to pour itself into God’s bosom freely, without something to raise and elevate it. Yea, often the springs of grace lie so low that pumping only will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul before the affections rise” (William Gurnall, 1660). Does not this explain why, after saying, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name,” that the psalmist *added*, “Bless the LORD, O my soul” (Psa 103:1-2)!

Ah, note well those words, dear reader, “Bless the Lord, O my *soul*,” and not merely by the lips. David dreaded lest, while the outward was awake, his inner man should be asleep. Are you equally careful as to this? David laboured so that no dullness and drowsiness should steal over his faculties. Therefore did he add, “*and all that is within me*, bless his holy name”—understanding, conscience, affections, and will. O that we may not be guilty of that awful sin about which Christ complained, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; *but their heart* is far from me” (Mat 15:8). Again we would note the repetition in Psalm 103:2, “Bless the LORD, *O my soul*.” How this shows us that we need to bestir ourselves repeatedly when about to approach the Majesty on High, seeking with all our might to throw off the spirit of sloth, formality, and hypocrisy.

Of old God’s servants complained, “There is none that calleth upon thy name, that *stirreth up himself* to take hold of thee” (Isa 64:7). Are we any better, my friends? Do *we* really bestir ourselves to “take hold” of God. We shall never be like Jacob—successful “wrestlers” with Him—until we do. There is little wonder that so few obtain answers to their petitions unto the throne of grace. It is not simply prayer, but “the effectual  *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam 5:16). Before seeking to approach the Most High we need to “prepare” our heart (Job 11:13) and beg God to “strengthen” it (Psa 27:14), so that we may be enabled to draw near with becoming reverence and humility, so that we may trust in Him with all our hearts (Pro 3:5), love Him with all our hearts (Mat 22:37), and praise Him with “the whole heart” (Psa 9:1).

O the frightful impiety which is now to be witnessed on almost every side, of heedlessly rushing into the holy presence of God (or rather, going through the form of so doing), and gabbling off the first things that come to mind. And all of us are more affected by this evil spirit than we imagine, for “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33). We need to definitely seek grace and fight against so grievously insulting God. We need to fix our minds steadily on the august perfections of God, reminding ourselves of *whom* it is we are about to approach. We need to seek deliverance from that half-hearted, ill-conceived, careless, and indifferent worship which is offered by so many. We need to ponder God’s grace and goodness unto us and lay hold of His encouraging promises that our affections may be inflamed and our souls brought into that gracious temper which is suited unto Him to whom we owe our all.

But not only do we need to diligently watch our hearts when about to approach God in prayer or worship, but also when turning to His Holy Word. All ordinances, helps, and means of grace, are but empty shells, unless we meet with God in them and for that, He must be sought, “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13). We are not at all likely to obtain any more soul profit from the reading of the Scriptures than we are from the perusal of men’s writings, if we approach them in the same spirit we do human books. God’s Word is addressed unto the conscience and it is only as we strive to have our hearts suitably affected by what we read therein, that we may justly expect to be helped spiritually.

God has bidden us, “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck” (Pro 6:20-21). And again, “Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart” (Pro 7:2-3). This cannot be done by reading the Bible for a few minutes and then an hour later forgetting what has been read. Shame on us that we should treat God’s Word so lightly. No, we must meditate therein day and night (Psa 1:2). Unless we do so, we shall never be able to say, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11), nor shall we be able to say, “Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes” (Psa 119:12).

To “keep” the heart signifies *attending diligently to its progress or decays in holiness*. What health is to the body, holiness is to the soul. “I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search” (Psa 77:6). This is absolutely essential if a healthy spiritual life is to be maintained. A part of each day should be set aside for the study of the heart and cultivation of its faculties. The more this is done, the less difficulty shall we experience in knowing *what* to pray for! O shame on us that we are so diligent in thinking about and caring for our bodies, while the state of our souls is so rarely inquired after. Emulate the example of Hezekiah, who “humbled himself for the pride of his heart” (2Ch 32:26). Peter’s heart was lifted up with self-confidence. His fall was preceded by “an haughty spirit” (Pro 16:18).

It is *in the heart* that all backsliding begins. Observe closely your affections and see whether God or the world is gaining ground in them. Watch whether you experience increasing profit and pleasure in reading God’s Word or whether you have to force yourself to it in order to discharge a duty. Observe the same thing in connection with prayer, whether you are finding increased or decreased liberty in pouring out your heart to God, whether you are having more freedom in so doing, or whether it is becoming an irksome task. Examine well your spiritual graces and ascertain whether your faith be in lively exercise, feeding upon the precepts and promises of God, whether your hope is lively, anticipating the glorious future, whether your love be fervent or cold, whether patience, meekness, self-control be greater or less.

To “keep” the heart signifies *to store it well with pure and holy things*. As the most effective way of getting a child to willingly drop some dirty trifle is to proffer it an apple or orange, so the best security for the soul against the allurements of Satan is to have it engaged with a lovelier and more satisfying Object. A heart which is filled and engaged with good is best protected against evil. Note well the order in Philippians 4:6-8, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*.” The heart which casts all its care upon God is well guarded from anxiety by His peace, but a pure atmosphere must be breathed if the soul is to be kept healthy and that is best promoted by thinking about wholesome, lovely, and praise-provoking things.

Commune frequently with Christ. Dwell upon His loveliness, stay in the sunshine of His presence, refresh your soul with those gifts and graces He is ever ready to bestow, and you shall have in yourself “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Joh 4:14). “Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things [the beauty of God and the glory of Christ], as it is our duty that they should be, and as it is our happiness when they are, what access could sin—with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons, with its envenomed baits—have upon our souls? How we should loathe all its proposals, and say unto them, Get you hence as an abominable thing” (John Owen).

(D.V. to be continued)

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 3. The Church of God

One might reasonably conclude that the Greek word for “church” settles forever not only the meaning of the term itself, but also the scope of its membership. Ek-klesia, by common consent, signifies “out-called” or “called out.” It is a separated company. Thus the “Church of God” is synonymous with “God’s elect.” The Church of God is neither broader nor narrower in its range than the entire election of grace. To deny this is, either on the one hand to repudiate the unequivocal meaning of “ek-klesia” or to reject on the other hand the Scripture doctrine of election. It is both a significant and ominous fact that the vast majority of “dispensationalists,” who limit the “Church” to believers of the Christian era, are men who so far from holding fast the precious and basic truth of God’s sovereign and unconditional election, insist that God loves everybody, that Christ atoned for the sins of the whole human race, and that the Holy Spirit is trying to save all who hear the Gospel. This, by itself, is quite sufficient to discredit these men in the eyes of all who love sound doctrine.

That the “Church” and “the elect” are co-extensive in their personal may be seen by a comparison of Colossians 1:24 with 2 Timothy 2:10. In the former, we read, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.” The “afflictions of Christ” do not refer to the sufferings of Christ personally, for *those* were all finished when He was exalted to the Father’s right hand. No, the allusion is unto “Christ” *mystical*, that is, unto the members of His mystical body, who are united to Him by such a near and vital bond, and with whom He has such a fellow-feeling for their infirmities, that *they* are called by *His* name. Those “afflictions” the apostle “filled up,” not vicariously, but ministerially, “for” the Church’s good.

Now in 2 Timothy 2:10 the same apostle declared, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake.” The “elect” are the ones whom God chose from everlasting unto salvation. For them the Lord Jesus obeyed and died, for them the Gospel is preached, and for their sakes ministers are qualified and commissioned to teach and suffer what they do in the faithful prosecution of this mission. But what we would here call particular attention unto is that, in Colossians 1:24, Paul speaks of his “sufferings” for “Christ’s body’s sake, which is the church,” while in 2 Timothy 2:10, he says he endured those sufferings for “the elect’s sake,” which proves that the “Church” and the “elect” are the *same persons*.

In Acts 20:28, we read of “the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” Here is declaration free from all ambiguity, which leaves an honest heart in no doubt whatever as to *who* compose the members of the “Church.” It is *all* for whom the precious blood of Christ was shed, Old Testaments saints just as truly as the New. Inasmuch as in the eternal purpose of God, Christ was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, His blood had a promissory or prospective value, as well as a retrospective. That is to say, the work which He historically completed at Calvary, accomplished as much for the elect of God who lived hundreds of years before that work was performed, as for those of God’s elect who live centuries after it was finished.

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27). And *who are* they that were “loved” by Christ antecedently to His giving Himself for them? The New Testament saints only? No, He had a people in Old Testament times too, unto whom He said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). Yea, of whom He declared, “The saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight” (Psa 16:3), and those people have been washed, cleansed, and sanctified by Him.

The “Church of God,” then, is that chosen generation, that royal priesthood, that holy nation, that peculiar people, whom He hath called out of darkness into His marvelous light to show forth His praises for all eternity (1Pe 2:9). Its members comprise the whole of that favoured company whom God chose in Christ their Head before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before Him. Whom He, in love, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph 1:3-4). Its members are those to whom Christ referred when He said, “that of all which he [the Father] hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (Joh 6:39), and concerning whom He declared, “all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them” (Joh 17:10). Its entire membership comprises the mystical body of Christ.

But it may be asked, where in the Old Testament do we have any reference *to* the mystical body of Christ? Answer, in many passages, so numerous that we can scarcely mention more than



a few of them here. Yet, ere turning to them, let it be pointed out that only an anointed eye is capable of discerning them. This does not mean that the interpretation we give to them is so far-fetched that only the credulous will receive it, nor that the passages themselves are so ambiguous that they are hard to be understood. No, rather does it mean that spirituality of mind is required in order to perceive their beauty and a comparison of the New Testament Scriptures with those of the Old is necessary so as to discover their hidden harmonies. As the principle we are now explaining is of such great importance in connection with our present study, let us point to a concrete example or illustration of it in the book of Acts.

“And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Act 9:4). Now an unspiritual reader would see in those words no reference whatever unto the mystical body (the Church) of Christ, nevertheless, it *is* unmistakably there. Saul of Tarsus thought he was righteously hounding a company of deluded fanatics and obstinate heretics, but he is now told that he was assaulting none other than the Lord of glory. But how could that be? Thus, there is such an intimate union existing between the Redeemer and the redeemed that what is done to the latter is done to the former. Christ and His people are *one*, for it is written that they are “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). Yea, “he that is *joined unto* the Lord is *one spirit*” (1Co 6:17).

Now the same vital relationship existing between the members of the body of Christ and their Head, which is explicitly taught in the New Testament, is with equal clearness implicitly revealed in the Old Testament. This living oneness which exists between the Lord and His people, causing Him to so absolutely identify Himself with them, that He declares when *they* are being persecuted, *He* is being persecuted, is brought out in many places. For example, in Isaiah 63:9 we read, “In all their affliction he was afflicted”—the reference is to the afflictions of Israel in Egypt. Just as when one member of the body is injured “all the members suffer with it” (1Co 12:26), so when the members of Jehovah’s body suffered in Egypt, their Head suffered too. We would beg the reader to give his prayerful and closest attention unto the passages which now follow.

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen 49:10). Here, we believe, was a prophecy that the Mediator should “gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (Joh 11:52). It expressed the same truth as is now made known in Ephesians 1:10, “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” The reference here is *not* to something which is yet to take place, but to that which *was* accomplished when God put all things under Christ’s feet, and gave Him “to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body” (Eph 1:22-23).

“And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more...and after that I will go out” (Exo 11:4-8). Though there *may be* room for an argument as to the grammatical structure of this passage and as to the antecedent of the personal pronoun, yet it is the writer’s studied conviction that it was JEHOVAH Himself who here said, “I will go out.” That is, JEHOVAH, as *one with* His people in their exodus. It was the Head absolutely identified with His body!

“The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with *me*” (Lev 25:23). A remarkable word indeed is this and one which has received far less

notice than it deserves. How close is the parallel between it and such a verse as John 17:16, “They are not of the world, *even as* I am not of the world”! It reveals to us the infinite condescension of JEHOVAH and shows Him *identified with* His people. Beautiful is it to see how that David, centuries later, laid hold of this word and pleaded before God the *spiritual union* existing between them, “Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am *a stranger with thee*, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were” (Psa 39:12).

“All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?” (Psa 35:10). Here is a verse which plainly gives the lie unto those who affirm that the “one Body” truth is quite unknown in the Old Testament. The Speaker in this verse is the Lord Jesus, as the next two verses unquestionably show. He speaks there as *the Head* of His body, which is the Church. He makes reference to His *mystical* “bones,” that is, to the *members* of His mystical Body, compare Ephesians 5:30.

The 40th is another Psalm where the Holy Spirit clearly records the *oneness* of Christ and His people. That this is a Messianic Psalm we know from the Spirit’s quotation of verses 6 and 7 in Hebrews 10. The first verse of it presents the suffering Saviour in Gethsemane. The second, shows us Christ delivered from the curse and brought forth on to resurrection ground. The third records His consequent praise, “He hath put a new song in *my* mouth, even praise unto *our* God.” Notice, very carefully, dear reader, the remarkable variation in the number of the pronouns. How plainly does the change from the “my” to the “our” bring out the *spiritual union* of the Redeemer and the redeemed! The same precious truth comes out again in verse 5, “Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to *us-ward*.” Christ’s use there of the “us-ward” unequivocally reveals the Head and the members of His body as *one before God*.

“O God, thou knowest *my foolishness*; and *my sins* are not hid from thee” (Psa 69:5). This, as is well known, is another of the Messianic Psalms, several of its verses being directly applied to Christ in the New Testament. It depicts many of the sufferings and sorrows He endured in the days of His flesh, while serving as the Sponsor and Surety of His people. It shows us the depths of humiliation and shame into which He descended in order to bring His people nigh unto God. It reveals His *oneness with* His people in their place of guilt and condemnation. So absolute is the union (here) between the Head and the members of His mystical body, that He speaks of *their* folly and sins as *His*!

“His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be *blessed in him*: all nations shall call him blessed” (Psa 72:17). Observe well that it is not (here) “blessed *by him*,” but “IN HIM.” It is exactly the same as what we find in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*.” In Psalm 87:7, we find David again declaring, “All my springs are *in thee*.” How greatly, then, do men err when they declare that “in Christ” truth is never found in the Old Testament.

“This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not” (Psa 81:5). What a remarkable statement is that! The speaker is none other than JEHOVAH, yet declares that the language of Egypt He “understood not.” There is only one way in which such a verse *can* be understood and that is by recognizing it was Christ speaking in the person of Israel—so *one with them* as to refer to their ignorance as His.

“O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and *look upon the face of thine anointed*” (Psa 84:8-9). What was this but the Psalmist

asking the Father to hear Him *for Christ's sake*! So too Daniel prayed, "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, *for the Lord's sake*" (Dan 9:17)! How these verses expose the ignorance and folly of those who affirm that the privileges enjoyed by the Old Testament saints were far inferior to ours, that they occupied a much lower spiritual plane.

Psalm 89:32-33. Those words occur in one of the great Messianic predictions. That Christ is here in view is plain from verse 27. Then, in the verses that follow, the Father speaks of Christ's "seed" or "children." But what we wish to particularly note is the remarkable change of pronouns in verses 32-33, which can *only* be accounted for on the ground that God was here speaking of the members of Christ's body, as *one with their Head*, He declares that though He will visit *their* transgressions with the rod and *their* iniquity with stripes, nevertheless, "My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from *him*," not "them," though He is speaking of them! And mark well how this wonderful passages closes, "The faithful witness *in heaven*" (v. 37), and this in a book which is supposed to treat *only* of "an earthly people"!

"My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psa 139:15-16). We will quote here from his "Treasury of David" a part of C. H. Spurgeon's comments, "As the form of Eve grew spiritually in silence and secrecy under the fashioning hand of the Maker, so at this hour is the Bride being fashioned for the Lord Jesus, or to change the figure—a body is being prepared in which the life and glory of the indwelling Lord shall be displayed. The Lord knoweth them that are His. He has a specially familiar acquaintance with the members of the body of Christ. He sees their substance, unperfect though they be."

"In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby HE shall be called, *THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*" (Jer 23:6). "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith *She* shall be called, *The LORD our righteousness*" (Jer 33:16)! Here we have the Bridegroom and the Bride given *the same name*. Nothing could possibly bring out more plainly the *oneness* of Christ and His people. Here we have in the Old Testament the mystical body, revealed as plainly as it is in the New Testament, where the Church is designated "Christ" (1Co 12:12). We here publicly challenge any man on earth to refute this affirmation.

In view of the many plain Scriptures above, what shall be thought of such statements as these, "the assembly, and its union with Christ, and adoption individually known, are the only things I am aware of *not revealed in the Old Testament*" (Synopsis vol. 2, p. 185 by J. N. Darby [1800-1882], the father of the "Plymouth Brethren"). "The revelation of this mystery, which was foretold, but not explained by Christ (Mat 16:18), was committed to Paul. In *his* writings *alone* we find the doctrine, position, walk, and duty of the Church" (Scofield Bible, under Eph 3:6)?

# THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR—PART 2

(Part 1 in August issue)

## Ephesians 6:10-18

The second part or piece of the Christian's armour is mentioned in Ephesians 6:14, "And having on the breastplate of righteousness." First of all, notice the connecting "and," which intimates that there is a very close relation between the mind being girded with truth and the heart protected with the breastplate of righteousness. All of these seven pieces of armour are *not* so connected, but the "and" here between the first two denotes that they are inseparably united. Now, obviously, the breastplate of righteousness is that protection which we need for *the heart*. This verse is closely parallel to Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," understanding by the "heart" the affections and conscience.

As there was a double reference in the word "truth," first to the Word of God and second to sincerity of spirit, so I believe there is a double reference here in "the breastplate of *righteousness*." I think it refers both to that righteousness which Christ wrought out for us and that righteousness which the Spirit works in us—both the righteousness which is imputed and the righteousness which is imparted, which is what we need if we are to withstand the attacks of Satan. We might compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8, "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." I have been quite impressed of late in noting how frequently that word "sober" occurs in the epistles, either in its substantive or verbal form. Soberness is that which should characterize and identify the people of God. It is the opposite of that superficial flightiness, which is one of the outstanding marks of worldlings today. It is the opposite of levity and also of that feverish restlessness of the flesh, by which so many are intoxicated religiously and every other way. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." Here, of course, it has the secondary meaning of what is in view in Ephesians 6:14. It is the practical righteousness, like what we find in Revelation 19:8.

This second piece of armour, as I have said, is inseparably connected with the girdle of truth, for sincerity of mind and holiness of heart must go together. It is in vain we pretend to the former, if the latter be lacking. Where there is genuine sincerity of mind, there will be, and is, holiness of heart. To put on the breastplate of righteousness, means to maintain the power of holiness over our affections and conscience! A verse that helps us to understand this is Acts 24:16, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." There you have an illustration of a man taking unto himself, putting on the "breastplate of righteousness." Paul exercised himself to maintain a good conscience, both Godward and

manward, and that requires daily diligence and persistent effort. Now the breastplate of righteousness is for withstanding Satan's temptations unto unholiness. The girdle of truth is to meet Satan's evil suggestions to defile the mind. The breastplate of righteousness is needed to foil his efforts to corrupt the affections or defile the conscience. Where there is not a conscience which reproaches us, then we soon fall victims to other attacks of the devil.

Passing on to the third piece of armour, "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15). This is perhaps the most difficult of the seven pieces of armour to understand and define, and yet, if we hold fast the first thought that the Holy Spirit is using a figure of speech here, that the reference is to that which is internal rather than external, spiritual rather than material, and also that He is following a logical order, there should not be much difficulty in ascertaining what is meant by the sandals of peace. Just as the girdle of truth has to do with the *mind*, the breastplate of righteousness with the *heart*, so the shoes for the feet are a figure of that which concerns the *will*. At first sight that may sound far-fetched and yet if we will think for a moment, it should be obvious that what the feet are to the body, the will is to the soul. The feet carry the body from place to place and the will is that which *directs* the activities of the soul. What the will decides, that is what we *do*.

Now the will is to be regulated by the peace of the Gospel. What is meant by that? This—in becoming reconciled to God and in having goodwill to our fellows, the Gospel is the means or instrument that God uses. We are told in Psalm 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." That means far more than they shall be ready to hearken to and believe the glad tidings of the Gospel. There is brought over into the Gospel, substantially, everything which was contained in both the moral and ceremonial Law. The Gospel is not only a message of good news, but a divine commandment and rule of conduct, "For the time is come that judgment must [not "shall"—now, not in the future!] begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1Pe 4:17). Yes, the Gospel is a rule to submit unto, a divine fiat which demands obedience, "your professed *subjection unto* the Gospel of Christ" (2Co 9:13). Those words are absolutely meaningless today in nine circles out of ten throughout Christendom, for the "Gospel" does not signify anything to them except "glad tidings"—there is nothing to be in "subjection to"! This is partly what I have in mind when saying there is carried over into and embodied in the Gospel the substance of everything which was found in the Law. Let me put it in another form—All the exhortations contained in the New Testament epistles are nothing more than explanations and applications of the Ten Commandments.

The Gospel requires us to deny ourselves, take up the cross daily, and follow Christ in the path of unreserved obedience to God. "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" signifies, with alacrity and readiness, response to God's revealed will. The *peace of* "the Gospel" comes from walking in subjection to its terms and by fulfilling the duties which it prescribes. Just so far as we are obedient to it, we experimentally enjoy its peace. Thus, this third piece of armour is for fortifying the will against Satan's temptations unto self-will and disobedience, and this, by subjection to the Gospel. Just as the feet are the members which convey the body from place to place, so the will directs the soul. And just as the feet must be adequately shod if we are to walk properly and comfortably, so the will must be brought into subjection unto the revealed will of God if we are to enjoy His peace.

Let there be that complete surrender daily, the dedicating of ourselves to God, and then we will be impervious unto Satan's attacks and temptations to disobedience. Just as the girdle of truth is to protect us from Satan's efforts to fill the mind with wandering thoughts and evil

imaginings, just as the breastplate of righteousness is God's provision to protect us from Satan's efforts to corrupt our hearts and produce that which is unholy, so having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace means the will being brought into subjection to God and *that* protects us from Satan's temptation unto disobedience.

You will notice when we come to the fourth piece of armour, the "and" is lacking. The first three were joined together, for that which is denoted by those figurative terms is inseparably linked together—the mind, the heart, the will—there you have the complete inner man. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph 6:16). I think the words "above all" have a double force. First, literally understanding them as a preposition of place, meaning over-all, shielding as a canopy, protecting the mind, heart, and will. There must be faith in exercise, if those three parts of our inner being are to be guarded. Second, "above all" may be taken adverbially, signifying, chiefly, pre-eminently, supremely. It is *an essential* thing that you should take the shield of faith, for Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him." Yes, even if there were sincerity, love, and a pliable will, yet without faith we could not please Him. Therefore, "above all" take unto you the shield of faith.

Faith is all in all resisting temptations. We must be fully persuaded of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures if we are to be awed by their precepts and cheered by their encouragements. We will never heed properly the divine warnings or consolations, unless we have explicit confidence in their divine authorship. The whole victory is here ascribed to *faith* "above all." It is not by the breastplate, helmet, or sword, but by the shield of faith that we are enabled to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. It seems to be a general principle, in the Spirit's arrangement of things in Scripture, to put the most vital one in the center. We have seven pieces of armour and the shield of faith is the fourth! So in Hebrews 6:4-6, we have five things mentioned and in the middle is, "made partakers of the Holy Spirit."

Faith is the life of all the graces. If faith be not in exercise, love, hope, patience cannot be. Here we find faith is likened unto a "shield," because it is intended for the defense of the whole man. The shield of the soldier is something he grips, and raises or lowers as it is needed. It is for the protection of his entire person. Now the figure which the Holy Spirit uses here, in connection with Satan's attacks, is taken from one of the devices of the ancients in their warfare, namely, the use of darts which had been dipped in tar and set on fire, in order to blind their foes. *That* is what lies behind the metaphor of "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." What is in view is Satan's efforts to prevent our looking upward! When those darts are in the air, the soldiers had to bow their heads to avoid them, holding their shields above. And Satan is seeking to prevent our looking upward.

The attacks of the devil are likened to "fiery darts," first, because of the *wrath* with which he shoots them. There is intense hatred in Satan against the child of God. Again, the very essence of his temptations is to *inflame* the passions and distress the conscience. He aims to enkindle covetousness, to excite worldly ambition, to ignite our lusts. In James 3:6, we read, "The tongue is set on fire of hell"—that means the devil's "fiery darts" have affected it. The third reason why his temptations are likened unto "fiery darts" is because of *the end* to which they lead if not quenched. Should Satan's temptations be followed out to the end, they would land us in the lake of fire. The figure of "darts" denotes that his temptations are swift, noiseless, dangerous.

Now taking the shield of faith means appropriating the Word and acting on it. The shield is to protect *the whole* person, wherever the attack be made, whether on spirit, or soul, or body. And there is that in the Word which is exactly suited unto each, but *faith* must lay hold of and employ

it. Now in order to use the shield of faith effectually, the Word of Christ needs to dwell in us “richly” (Col 3:16). We must have right to hand a word which is pertinent for the particular temptation presented. For example, if tempted unto covetousness, I must use, “Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth” (Mat 6:19). When solicited by evil companions, “If sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Pro 1:10). If tempted to harshness, “Be kindly affectioned one to another” (Rom 12:10). It is because the *details* of Scripture have so little place in our meditations that Satan trips us so frequently.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph 6:16). Like most of the other terms used, “faith” here also has a double signification. The faith which is to be our “shield” is both an objective and a subjective one. It has reference, first, to the Word of God without, the authority of which is ever binding upon me. It points, secondly, to my confidence in that Word, the heart going out in trustful expectation to the Author of it and counting upon its efficacy to repulse the devil.

“And take the helmet of salvation” (Eph 6:17). This is the fifth piece of the Christian’s armour. First of all we may note the link between the fourth and fifth pieces as denoted by the word “and,” for this helps us to define *what* the “helmet of salvation” is. It is *linked with faith!* Hebrews 11:1 tells us, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for,” and if we compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8, we get a confirmation of that thought, “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation.” Here in Thessalonians, then, we have “hope” directly connected with “the helmet.” Incidentally, this verse is one of many in the New Testament which puts salvation in the future, rather than in the past!—hope always looks forward, having to do with things to come, as Romans 8:25 tells us, “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” Now faith and hope are inseparable. They are one in birth and one in growth, and we may add, one in decay. If faith languishes, hope is listless.

By the helmet of salvation, then, I understand the heart’s expectation of the good things promised, a well-grounded assurance that God *will* make good to His people those things which His Word presents for future accomplishment. We might link up with this 1 John 3:3—scriptural hope *purifies*. It delivers from discontent and despair. It comforts the heart in the interval of waiting. Satan is unable to get a Christian to commit many of the grosser sins which are common in the world, so he attacks along other lines. Often he seeks to cast a cloud of gloom over the soul or produce anxiety about the future. Despondency is one of his favourite weapons, for he knows well that “the joy of the Lord” is our “strength” (Neh 8:10), hence his frequent efforts to dampen our spirits. To repulse these, we are to “take the helmet of salvation.” That is, we are to exercise *hope*.

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17). God has provided His people with an offensive weapon as well as defensive ones. At first sight that may seem to clash with what we said about Christians *not* being called upon to be aggressive against Satan, seeking to invade his territory and wrest it from him. But this verse does not clash to the slightest degree. 2 Corinthians 7:1 gives us the thought, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” *That* is the active, aggressive side of the Christian’s warfare. We are not only to resist our lusts, but to subdue and overcome them.

It is significant to note *how late* the “sword of the Spirit” is mentioned in this list. Some have thought that it should have come first, but it is not mentioned until the sixth. Why? I believe there is a twofold reason. First, because all the other graces that have been mentioned are necessary in order to make a right use of the Word. If there is not a sincere mind and a holy heart, we shall

only handle the Word dishonestly. If there is not practical righteousness, then we shall only be handling the Word theoretically. If there is not faith and hope, we shall only misuse it. All the Christian graces that are figuratively contemplated under the other pieces of armour, must be in exercise *before* we can profitably handle the Word of God. Second, it teaches us that, even when the Christian has attained unto the highest point possible in this life, he still needs *the Word*. Even when he has upon him the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, his feet shod with the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and has taken unto himself the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, he still needs the Word!

The Word of God is here called “the sword of the Spirit” because He is the Author, the Interpreter, and the Applier of it. He is the only One that can give it power over us. We can handle the Word, meditate upon it, pray over it, and it has no effect upon us whatsoever, *unless the Spirit applies* His sword! If you think of this verse in the light of Christ’s temptation, you will find that He used that sword for self-defense in repulsing the assaults of the devil. He was *not* aggressively attacking him! And blessed, too, is it to mark that, as the dependent Man, He used that weapon in the power of “the Spirit.” See Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:14.

The last piece of armour is given in Ephesians 6 verse 18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” *Prayer* is that which alone gives us the necessary strength *to use* the other pieces of armour! After the Christian has taken unto himself those six pieces, before he is thoroughly furnished to go forth unto battle and fitted for victory, he needs the help of his General. For this, the apostle bids us to pray “always” with all supplication of the Spirit. We are to fight upon our knees! Only prayer can keep alive the different spiritual graces which are figured by the various pieces of armour. “Praying always.” In *every* season—in times of joy as well as sorrow, in days of adversity as well as prosperity. Not only so, but “*watching thereunto* with all perseverance.” That is one of the essential elements in prevailing prayer—persistency. Watch yourself that you do not let up, become slack or discouraged. Keep on! The eighteenth verse is as though the apostle said, “Forget not to seek unto *the God of this ‘armour,’* and make humble supplication for His assistance, for only He who has given us these arms can enable us to make a successful use of them.” Some have called it the “all verse.” “Praying always with all prayer...with all perseverance and supplication *for all saints.*” Think not only of yourself, but also of your fellow-soldiers who are engaged in the same conflict!

*Question*, What does the twelfth verse mean? *Answer*, It does not refer to the sphere or place where the “wrestling” itself is done, but emphasizes the fact that the foes which attack the Christian are superhuman. We are not to interpret that verse by the language of earth’s geography. It does *not* say, “for *we* wrestle in high places against principalities and powers.” No, the high places are connected with those who attack the Christian and not with the place where the wrestling is done.

The above is a Bible reading, revised, given by the Editor to a little company in the home which God has kindly loaned us.



# FURNACE CONDUCT

“Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires” (Isa 24:15). The context presents a fearfully solemn picture. It describes a time when the judgments of God are abroad. When He causes the earth to mourn and the world to languish. When His curse devours and maketh desolate. When all classes are alike made to smart from His rod. The merry-hearted do sigh, the joy of the harp ceaseth, the new wine mourneth, yea, we are told, “All joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone” (Isa 24:11). *Then it is* that this remarkable word is given to God’s people, “Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires.” It is true that conditions on earth today are not nearly so dreadful as those described in the first part of Isaiah 24, yet they *are* of such a character as to make this exhortation a timely one for many.

“Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires.” These are the words of *a godly remnant* who had been preserved in the midst of desolation. How few they were in number may be seen from verse 13. They are likened unto the handful of berries still on the boughs after the olive tree has been shaken and unto the odd grapes remaining on the vine after the vintage. Thank God there always has been a faithful remnant preserved by Him in the most evil times, for He will not leave Himself without a witness on the earth. This little remnant is here seen triumphing, for it is said, “They shall lift up their voice, they shall *sing* for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea” (v. 14), that is, from amid the nations in a state of tumult.

Those who comprised this little remnant are here seen calling upon one another to delight themselves in the Lord, to rejoice amid their afflictions. Instead of giving vent to complainings and repinings, their word is, “Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires.” It is easy to be thankful and happy in times of peace and plenty, but it is contrary to flesh and blood to sing songs in the furnace, yet *this* is what the saints are here enjoined to do! No matter what may be their circumstances, how scant their portion, how trying their lot, Christians ought to *glorify* the Lord in them. For what purpose does He leave us here upon earth, but to honour Him, to witness for Him, to *make manifest unto others* the sufficiency of His grace?

“Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires” (Isa 24:15). We shall not here attempt a strict exegesis of this verse, rather would we endeavour to make a practical application of it unto ourselves in these difficult days. At all times, in all cases, it is both the privilege and the duty of the Christian to “glorify” the Lord. He must not succumb to fear, but seek the Holy Spirit’s strengthening of his faith. He is not to be the “victim of circumstances,” but obtain grace to rise above and be victor over them. He is not to give way to abject despair like the poor worldling, but make it evident to those about him that the Lord *is* “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1). “Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires.” But *how* are we to do so?

1. *By honest self-judgment.* By which we mean, a frank acknowledgment that we fully deserve the chastening rod of God which is now upon us, owning with David, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75). God will not

suffer His people to sin without rebuke (see Psa 89:30-32), and He is “glorified” when they candidly own His righteousness in correcting them. The cause of all affliction is sin and therefore God’s justice must be acknowledged in His visitation upon it. He is grossly insulted if we say, “I know not why God should deal with me so hardly. I have been guilty of nothing which calls for such severe treatment”—that is the language either of rebellion or self-righteousness. Rather say with Micah, “I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him” (Mic 7:9).

If we are to “glorify the LORD in the fires” we must not only affirm the general truth that all His disciplinary dealings under providence are “right,” but particular application must be made thereof, “In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.” We must not only own the faithfulness of God when we are at ease, but under the sharpest chastisement. God’s judgments do not come upon us at random, “*for this cause* many are weak and sickly” (1Co 11:30). Say, then, with Nehemiah, “Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly” (Neh 9:33). Yea, own with Ezra, “Thou our God hast punished us *less* than our iniquities deserve” (Ezr 9:13). It is much for the honour of God that we have good thoughts of Him when under the rod and that we vindicate Him in all His ways with us.

2. *By not murmuring.* Why should we grumble when we *justly* suffer what we do? “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” (Lam 3:39). If we are now reaping as we sowed, then there is none to blame but our foolish and wicked selves for sowing *what* we did. Therefore, to put it on the lowest ground, we act irrationally when we sulk and growl under God’s rod. Of Hannah we read that “she was in bitterness of soul,” yes, but observe what follows, “*and* prayed unto the LORD” (1Sa 1:10). Instead of allowing her trouble to drive her from the Lord, it cast her back the more upon Him. To murmur is only to tempt the Lord to smite us yet more sharply! What did the children of Israel gain by their murmurings in the wilderness? Nothing, only they were made to smart for it.

Certainly we do not “glorify the LORD in the fires” by chafing and repining against His disciplinary dealings with us. O to say with David, “I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress” (Psa 17:3). We are kept from uttering much that is grievously dishonouring to God when we rigorously muzzle our mouths. For a Christian to murmur against God’s providential dealings is for him to deny His justice, impugn His wisdom, and call into question His love—sins of the deepest dye are these! Remember that things might be much worse. God has not cast us into the everlasting burnings—then why resemble, in any degree, those who gnash their teeth against Him? Let us not forget the Word declares, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (Jam 1:26).

3. *By not fainting.* This is the other extreme which a suffering saint needs to guard against. When God’s grace subdues our hearts from rising up in rebellion against the One who is righteously smiting us, there is ever a real danger of our spirits sinking into a state of despondency. Therefore does our loving Father say, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, *nor faint* when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). Certainly the Lord is not glorified by us in the fires if we give way to a spirit of gloomy despair. Rather are we to diligently seek the supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit that we may heed that exhortation, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD” (Psa 27:14).

It is a great support to the Christian’s heart to remember that the chastening rod is wielded by *love* (Heb 12:6), and that God is as much our Father when He frowns as when He smiles, when He whips as when He embraces. God’s strokes do not make void His promises, nor do they retract His pardon. Tribulation and trouble are no proofs of God’s disfavour, but tokens of His

faithfulness. Therefore instead of doubting His goodness, we should return thanks for His discipline. The “all things” of Romans 8:28 as surely include the cloud and shadows, as the showers and sunshine. Yea, the immediate context treats directly of sufferings and sorrows! Then doubt not God’s mercy, repine not at His providences, faint not under His rod. All will be well at the last.

4. *By exercising faith.* God’s purpose in leading Israel “through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought,” was that He might “humble” them, “prove” them, and do them “good at their latter end” (Deu 8:15-16). God has promised to support His people under their trials (Deu 33:27), to bring them safely through their afflictions (Isa 41:10), to turn all things to their advantage (Rom 8:28), and to “perfect” that which concerneth them (Psa 138:8). Then say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). God disposes all things for the eternal welfare of His people. Do you answer, “But I am greatly afraid that I have provoked the Lord to leave me to myself.” Even so, that word still stands good, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1Jo 1:9).

We greatly glorify the Lord in the fires when we seek and obtain from the Holy Spirit that strengthening of faith which enables us to trust God “with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding (Pro 3:5). Faith may be likened unto a lifebelt. It is of little or no value unless it supports its possessor in the deep and dark waters. Faith does not make us impervious unto the chilliness of the waters or to change the figure, it does not make the furnace any cooler or more pleasant, but it *does* enable its favoured possessor to say with Job, “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10).

5. *By perfect endurance.* “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (Jam 5:10). The final words of that verse mean far more than the prophets meekly tolerated their sufferings. They signify that they also continued steadily in the path of duty. Now that so many are out of secular employment, they have more time for reading, meditation, and prayer, and unless they are giving themselves regularly unto these spiritual exercises, they are lamentably failing to heed that exhortation, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16). No matter how dark the outlook may appear to carnal reason, the Christian ought to ever say, “But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more” (Psa 71:14).

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (Jam 1:12). To “endure” trials or temptations is to bear them patiently and with constancy go through all difficulties in the way of duty. The word “tried” here signifies *approved* as in Romans 14:18, 1 Corinthians 11:19. There must be testings to make evident the integrity of our profession and to make manifest the genuineness of our graces. Thus there is a *needs-be* for the furnace (cf. 1Pe 1:7). Then let us seek grace to heed that word, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luk 21:19).

6. *By thanksgiving and praise.* “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 5:20). Be thankful things are not worse. Be thankful that if the Lord be our shepherd we *shall not* “want” (Psa 23:1). Be thankful that our trials are only for a comparatively brief moment, whereas the sufferings of the wicked will last for all eternity. “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope.” (Rom 5:3-4). But what is there *in* “tribulations” which can afford ground for “glorifying”? This—they furnish an opportunity for faith, hope, love, to be exercised. They

supply occasion for God to manifest His unchanging faithfulness. They bring *spiritual* blessing to the soul.

We recently received a letter which touchingly illustrated this sixth point. While on the foreign field, a missionary's wife was taken ill and ordered back. On arriving home, she was operated upon to find a terrible cancer in an advanced stage, the doctors pronouncing "No hope." Her stricken husband wrote, "This was a terrible announcement to me at first, but the Lord has given grace to bear it, and I trust that I shall be able to sincerely say—not that I put up with His will, but that I rejoice in it"!

7. *By cheerfulness.* God is greatly glorified when His people preserve a bright countenance before the world and by their demeanour give evidence that *they* have a source of peace and joy which others are strangers to. *This* is something which speaks much more forcibly than any sermons we preach with our lips! "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat 5:16). Yes, we may honour or dishonour God by the very expressions on our faces! Ponder the principle enunciated in Matthew 7:17-18, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed" (Psa 34:5).

# August

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 7. The Holy Spirit and Christ: Part One

In writing upon the Holy Spirit and Christ, it is to be understood that we are not now contemplating our Lord as the second Person of the Trinity, but rather as the God-man *Mediator*, and the Holy Spirit not in His Godhead abstractly considered, but in His *official* discharge of the work assigned Him in the everlasting covenant. This is undoubtedly the most difficult aspect of our subject, yet it is very important that we should prayerfully strive after clear scriptural views thereof. To apprehend aright, even according to our present limited capacity, the relation between the Holy Spirit and the Redeemer throws much light on some difficult problems, supplies the key to a number of perplexing passages in Holy Writ, and better enables us to understand the work of the Spirit in the saint. May we be mercifully preserved from all error as we endeavour to give our best attention unto the present theme and be guided to write that which will glorify our Triune God and edify His dear people.

“Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the LORD GOD, and his spirit, hath sent me” (Isa 48:16). This remarkable verse presents to us the Lord Jesus speaking of old by the spirit of prophecy. He declares that He had always addressed the nation in the most open manner, from the time when He appeared unto Moses at the burning bush and called Himself, “I am that I am” (Exo 3), and He was constantly present with Israel as their Lord and Deliverer. And now the Father and the Spirit had sent Him to effect the promised spiritual deliverance of His people. Sent Him in the likeness of sin’s flesh, to preach the Gospel, fulfill the Law, and make a perfect satisfaction unto divine justice for His Church. Here, then, is a glorious testimony unto a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead—the Son of God is sent in human nature and as Mediator. JEHOVAH the Father *and the Spirit* are the senders and so is a proof of Christ’s mission, commission, and authority, who came not of Himself, but was sent of God (Joh 8:42).

“The LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man” (Jer 31:22). Here we have one of the prophetic announcements of the wonder of the divine incarnation, the eternal Word becoming flesh, a human body and soul prepared for Him by the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit. Here the prophet intimates that the creating power of

God was to be put forth under which a woman was to compass a Man. The virgin Mary, under the overshadowing power of the Highest (Luk 1:35) was to conceive and bring forth a Child, without the help or cooperation of man. This transcendent wonder Isaiah calls a “sign” (Isa 7:14), Jeremiah “a new thing in the earth,” the New Testament record of which is, “When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Mat 1:18).

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him...And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luk 2:40, 52). Not only was the humanity of Christ supernaturally begotten by the Holy Spirit, but it was “anointed” by Him (cf. Lev 2:1 for the type), endued with all spiritual graces. All the progress in the Holy Child’s mental and spiritual development, all His advancement in knowledge and holiness, must be ascribed unto the Spirit. “Progress,” in the human nature which He deigned to assume, side by side with His own divine perfection, is quite compatible, as Hebrews 2:14, 17 plainly intimate. As George Smeaton (1814-1889) has so helpfully pointed out in his book, the Spirit’s operations “formed the link between Christ’s deity and humanity, perpetually imparting the full consciousness of His personality, and making Him inwardly aware of His divine Sonship at all times.”

Thus the Spirit, at the incarnation, became the great guiding principle of all Christ’s earthly history and that according to the order of operation that ever belongs to the Holy Trinity—all proceeds *from* the Father, *through* the Son, and is *by* the Holy Spirit. It was the Spirit who formed Christ’s human nature and directed the whole tenor of His earthly life. Nothing was undertaken but by the Spirit’s directing, nothing was spoken but by His guidance, nothing executed but by His power. Unless this be steadfastly maintained, we are in grave danger of confounding the two natures of Christ, absorbing the one in the other, instead of keeping them separate and distinct in our thoughts. Had His deity been absorbed by His humanity, then grief, fear, and compassion had been impossible. The right use of the faculties of His soul owed their exercise to the Holy Spirit who fully controlled Him.

“From birth to baptism the Spirit directed His mental and moral development, and strengthened and kept Him through all the years of preparation and toil. He was in the Carpenter as truly as in the Messiah, and the work at the bench was as perfect as the sacrifice on the cross” (Samuel Chadwick, 1860-1932). At first sight, such a statement may seem to derogate from the *personal* honour of the Lord Jesus, but if we perceive that, according to the *order* of the Trinity, the Spirit exercises His power only to execute the will of the Father and the Son, then the seeming difficulty disappears. So far is the interposition of the Spirit’s operations from interfering with the glory of the Son, it rather reveals Him the more conspicuously—that in the work of redemption, the activities of the Spirit are next in order to those of the Son. To this we may add another excerpt from G. Smeaton:

“The two natures of our Lord *actively concurred* in every mediatorial act. If He assumed human nature in the true and proper sense of the term into an union with His divine person, *that* position must be maintained. The Socinian objection that there could be no further need for the Spirit’s agency, and in fact, no room for it—if the divine nature was *active* in the whole range of Christ’s mediation—is meant to perplex the question, because these men deny the existence of any divine nature in Christ’s person. That style of reasoning is futile, for the question simply is, What do the Scriptures teach? Do they affirm that *Christ was anointed by the Spirit* (Act 10:38)? that He was led out into the wilderness by the Spirit? that He returned in the power of the Spirit to begin His public ministry? that He performed His miracles by the Spirit? and that, previously to

His ascension, He gave commandments by the Spirit to His disciples whom He had chosen (Act 1:2)?

“No warrant exists for anything akin to the *Kenotic* or depotentialization theory, which denudes Him of the essential attributes of His Godhead and puts His humanity on a mere level with that of other men. And as little warrant exists for denying the Spirit’s work on Christ’s humanity in every mediatorial act which He performed on earth or performs in heaven. The unction of the Spirit must be traced in all His personal and official gifts. In Christ, the Person and office coincide. In His divine Person, He was the substance of all the offices to which He was appointed and these He was fitted by the Spirit to discharge. The offices would be nothing apart from Himself and could have neither coherence nor validity without the underlying Person.”

If the above still appears to derogate from the glory of our Lord’s Person, most probably the difficulty is created by the objector’s failing to realize the *reality* of the Son’s humanity. The mystery is indeed great and our only safeguard is to adhere strictly unto the several statements of Scripture thereon. Three things are to be kept steadily in view. First, in *all* things (sin excepted) the eternal Word was “made like unto his brethren” (Heb 2:17). All His human faculties developed normally as He passed through infancy, childhood, and youth. Second, His divine nature underwent no change or modification when He became incarnate, yet it was not merged into His humanity, but preserved its own distinctness. Third, He *was* “anointed with the Spirit” (Act 10:38), nay, He was the absolute receiver of the Spirit, poured on Him in such a plenitude that it was *not* by measure (Joh 3:34).

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 67. The Faith of Isaac (11:20)

Though Isaac lived the longest of the four great patriarchs, yet less is recorded about him than any of the others. Some twelve chapters are devoted to the biography of Abraham and a similar number each to Jacob and Joseph, but excepting for one or two brief mentionings before and after, the history of Isaac is condensed into two chapters, Genesis 26 and 27. Contrasting his character with those of his father and of his son, we may assume that there is noted less of Abraham’s triumphs of faith and less of Jacob’s failures. Taking it on the whole, the life of Isaac is a disappointing one. It begins brightly, but ends amid the shadows—like that of so many, it failed to fulfill its early promise.

The one act in Isaac’s life which the Holy Spirit selected for mention in the Scroll of Faith takes us back to Genesis 27, where, as the Puritan John Owen (1616-1683) well said, “There is none (other story) in the Scripture filled with more intricacies and difficulties as unto a right judgment of the things related, though the matter of fact be clearly and distinctly set down. The whole represents unto us divine sovereignty, wisdom and faithfulness, working effectually through the frailties, infirmities, and sins of all the persons concerned in the matter.”

Genesis 27 opens by presenting unto us Isaac in his old age and declares that “his eyes were dim, so that he could not see” (Gen 27:1). It ought not to need saying that we have there something more than a mere reference to the state of his physical eyes, yet in these days when so many glory in their understanding the Word “literally,” God’s servants need to dwell upon the most elementary spiritual truths. Everything in Holy Writ has a deeper significance than the “literal” and we are greatly the losers when we limit ourselves to the “letter” of any verse. Let us contrast this statement concerning Isaac’s defective vision with what is recorded of another servant of God at the same advanced age, “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: *his* eye was not dim” (Deu 34:7).

Genesis 27 shows us the low state into which a child of God may get. Isaac presents unto us a solemn warning of the evil consequences which follow failure to judge and refuse our natural appetites. If we do not mortify our members which are upon the earth, if we do not abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, then the fine edge of our spiritual life will be blunted and the fine gold will become dim. If we live to eat, instead of eating to live, our spiritual vision is bound to be defective. Discernment is a by-product, the fruit and result of the denying of self and following of Christ (Joh 8:12). It was this self-abnegation which was so conspicuous in Moses. He learned to refuse that which appealed to the flesh—a position of honour as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, that is why *his* “eye was not dim.” He saw that the brick-making Hebrews were the people of God, the objects of His sovereign favour, and following his spiritual promptings, threw in his lot with them.

How different was the case with poor Isaac! Instead of keeping his body in subjection, he indulged it. More than a hint of this is given in Genesis 25:28, “And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison.” This brought him under the influence of one who could be of no help to him spiritually and he loved him because he ministered unto his fleshly appetites. And now in Genesis 27, when he thought that the end of his days was near and he desired to bestow the patriarchal blessing upon his son, instead of giving himself to fasting and prayer, and then acting in accord with the revealed will of God, we are told that he called for Esau and said, “Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die” (Gen 27:3-4). This is what furnishes the key to the immediate sequel.

“And the LORD said unto her (viz., Rebekah), Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:23). This is the Scripture which supplies the second key to the whole incident recorded in Genesis 27 and opens for us in Hebrews 11:20. Here we find God making known the destiny of Jacob and Esau. Observe that this revelation was made unto the mother (who had “inquired of the Lord,” Gen 25:22) and not to their father. That, later on, Isaac himself became acquainted with its terms, is clear, but as to how far he really apprehended their meaning is not easy to say.

The word that the Lord had spoken unto her, Rebekah believed, yet she failed to exercise full confidence in Him. When she saw Isaac’s marked partiality for Esau and learned that her husband was about to perform the last religious act of a patriarchal priest and pronounce blessing on his sons, she became fearful. When she heard Isaac bid Esau make him some “savoury meat”—evidently desiring to enkindle or intensify his affections for Esau, so that he might bless him with all his heart—she imagined that the purpose of God was about to be thwarted and resorted unto measures which ill become a daughter of Jehovah, and which can by no means be justified. We



will not dwell upon the deception which she prompted Jacob to adopt, but would point out that it supplies a solemn example of real faith being resolutely fixed on the divine promises, but employing irregular ways and wrong means for the obtaining of them.

In what follows, we see how Isaac was deceived by Jacob posing as Esau. Though uneasy and suspicious at first, his fears were largely allayed by Jacob's lies, though perceiving the voice was that of the younger son, yet his hands appeared to be those of the elder. Pathetic indeed is it to see the aged patriarch reduced unto the sense of touch in his efforts to identify the one who had now brought him the longed-for venison. It is *this* which should speak loudly to our hearts. He who yields to the lusts of the flesh injures his spiritual instincts and opens wide the door for the devil to impose upon him and deceive him with his lies! He who allows natural sentiments and affections to override the requirements of God's revealed will is reduced to a humiliated state in the end. How often it proves that a man's spiritual foes are they of his own household! Isaac loved Esau unwisely.

But now we must face a difficult question—Did Isaac deliberately pit himself against the known counsel of God? Did he defiantly purpose to bestow upon Esau what he was assured the Lord had appointed for Jacob? “Whatever may be spoken in excuse of Isaac, it is certain he failed greatly in two things. First, in his inordinate love to Esau (whom he could not but know to be a profane person) and that on so slight an account as eating of his venison, Genesis 25:28. Second, in that he had not sufficiently inquired into the mind of God, in the oracle that his wife received concerning their sons. There is no question on the one hand, but that he knew of it, nor on the other, that he did not understand it. For if the holy man had known that it was the determinate will of God, he would not have contradicted it. But this arose from want of diligent inquiry by prayer into the mind of God” (John Owen).

We heartily agree with these remarks of the eminent Puritan. While the conduct of Isaac on this occasion was far from becoming a child of God, who concluded his earthly pilgrimage was now nearly complete, yet charity forbids us to put the worst possible construction upon his action. While his affection for Esau was misplaced, yet in the absence of any clear scriptural proof, we are not warranted in thinking that he sinned presumptuously, by deliberately resisting the revealed will of God, rather must we conclude that he had no clear understanding of the divine oracle given to Rebekah—his spiritual discernment was dim, as well as his physical vision! As to the unworthy part played by Rebekah and Jacob, their efforts are to be regarded not so much as the feverish energies of the flesh, seeking to force the fulfillment of God's promise, but as well-meant but misguided intentions to *prevent* the thwarting of God's purpose. Their fears remind us of Uzzah's in 2 Samuel 6:6.

The one bright spot in the somber picture which the Holy Spirit has so faithfully painted for us in Genesis 27 is found in verse 33. Right after Isaac had pronounced the major blessing on Jacob, Esau entered the tent, bringing with him the savoury meat which he had prepared for his father. Isaac now realized the deception which had been played upon him and we are told that he “trembled very exceedingly.” Was he shaking with rage at Jacob's treachery? No, indeed. Was he, as one commentator has suggested, fearful that he might suffer injury at the hands of the hot-headed Esau? No, his next words explode such a theory. Rather was it he now realized that he had been out of harmony with the divine will and that God had providentially intervened to effect His own counsels. He was awed to the very depths of his soul.

Blessed indeed is it to behold how the spirit triumphed over the flesh. Instead of bursting out with an angry curse upon the head of Jacob, Isaac said, “I have blessed him, yea, and he *shall be* blessed” (Gen 27:33). That was the language of faith overcoming his natural partiality for Esau. It

was the recognizing and acknowledging of the immutability and invincibility of the divine decrees. He realized that God is in one mind and none can turn Him, that though there are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand (Pro 19:21). Nor could the tears of Esau move the patriarch. Now that the entrance of God's words had given him light, now that the overruling hand of God had secured His own appointment, Isaac was firm as a rock. The righteous may fall, but they cannot be utterly cast down.

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come" (Heb 11:20). Jacob, the younger, had the precedence and principal blessing. Strikingly did this exemplify the high sovereignty of God. To take the younger, and leave the elder to perish in their ways, is a course the Lord has often followed, from the beginning of the world. Abel, the junior, was preferred before Cain. Shem was given the precedence over Japheth the elder (Gen 10:21). Afterwards, Abraham, the younger, was taken to be God's favourite. Of Abraham's two sons, the older one, Ishmael, was passed by and in Isaac was the Seed called. Later, David, who was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, was selected to be the man after God's own heart. And God still writes, as with a sunbeam in the course of His providence, that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

The "blessing" which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob was vastly superior to the portion allotted Esau, though if we look no deeper than the letter of the words which their father used, there appears to be very little difference between them. Unto Jacob, Isaac said, "GOD give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine" (Gen 27:28). What follows in verse 29 chiefly concerned his posterity. Unto Esau, Isaac said, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother" (Gen 27:39-40). Apart from the younger son having the pre-eminence over the elder, wherein lay the peculiar excellence of his portion? If there had been nothing *spiritual* in the promise, it would have been no comfort to Jacob at all, for the temporal things mentioned were not his portion, as he acknowledged to Pharaoh, "few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Gen 47:9).

What has just been before us supplies a notable example of how the Old Testament promises and prophecies are to be interpreted, not carnally, but mystically. That Jacob's portion far excelled Esau's is clear from Hebrews 12:17, where it is denominated, "*the blessing*." What that is was made clearer when Isaac *repeated* his benediction upon Jacob, saying, "And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed" (Gen 28:4). Here is the key which we need to unlock its meaning, as Galatians 3:9, 14, 29 clearly enough show, the "blessing of Abraham" (into which elect Gentiles enter, through Christ) is purely a spiritual thing. Further proof that the same spiritual blessing which God promised to Abraham was also made over by Isaac to Jacob is found in his words, I "have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed" (Gen 27:33), for Jehovah had employed the same language when blessing the father of all believers, "in blessing I will bless thee" (Gen 22:17). To this may be added Isaac's, "Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee" (Gen 27:29), being part of the very words God used to Abraham, see Genesis 12:2-3.

Now in seeking to rightly understand the language of Isaac's prophecy, it must be recognized that (oftentimes) in the Old Testament heavenly things were referred to in earthly terms, that spiritual blessings were set forth under the figure of material things. Due attention to this fact will render luminous many a passage. Such is the case here. Under the emblems of the "dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth," three great spiritual blessings were intended. First, that he was to have a real relation to Christ, that he should be one of the progenitors of the Messiah—this was

the chief favour and dignity bestowed upon “Abraham.” It is in the light of this that we are to understand Genesis 27:29 as ultimately referring, “let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee,” that is, to the top branch which should proceed from him—unto Christ, unto whom all men are commanded to render allegiance (Psa 2:10-12).

Second, the next great blessing of “Abraham” was that he should be the priest that should continue the worship of God and teach the laws of God (Gen 26:5). The bowing down of his brethren to Jacob (Gen 27:29) was the owning of his priestly dignity. Herein also lay Jacob’s blessing to be in the church and to have the church continued in his line. This was symbolically pointed to in “that thou mayest inherit the land” (Gen 28:4). “The church is the ark of Noah, which is only preserved in the midst of floods and deep waters. The church is the land of Goshen, which only enjoys the benefits of light, when there is nothing but darkness round about elsewhere. It is the fleece of Gideon, being wet with the dews of heaven, moistened with the influences of grace, when all the ground round about is dry” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). As to how high is the honour of having the church continued in our line, the Spirit intimates in Genesis 10:21—Eber being the father of the Hebrews, who worshipped God.

Third, another privilege of Jacob above Esau was this, that he was taken into covenant with God, “The blessing of Abraham shall come upon thee.” And what was that? This, And I will “be a God *unto thee*, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen 17:7). This is the greatest happiness of any people, to have God for *their* God—to be in covenant with Him. Thus when Noah came to pronounce blessings and curses on his children, by the spirit of prophecy, he said, “Blessed be the LORD GOD of Shem” (Gen 9:26). Afterward the same promise was made unto all Israel, “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exo 20:2). So under the new covenant (the present administration of the everlasting covenant), he says, “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Heb 8:10). To be a “God” to any is to supply them with all good things necessary for temporal or spiritual life.

The fulfillment of Isaac’s prophetic blessing upon his sons was mainly in their descendants, rather than in their own persons—Jacob’s spiritual children, Esau’s natural. Concerning the latter, we would note two details. First, Isaac said to him, “Thou shalt serve thy brother,” second, “and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck” (Gen 27:40). For long centuries, there seemed no likelihood of the first part of this prediction being fulfilled, but eight hundred years later, David said, “over Edom will I cast out my shoe” (Psa 60:8), which meant he would bring the haughty descendants of Esau into a low and base state of subjection to him, which was duly accomplished—“all they of Edom became David’s *servants*” (2Sa 8:14)! Though their subjugation continued for a lengthy period of time, yet, in the days of Jehoshaphat, we read, “In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves” (2Ki 8:20)!

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” (Heb 11:20). This “blessing” was more than a dying father expressing good-will unto his sons. It was extraordinary. Isaac spoke as a prophet of God, announcing the future of his posterity and the varied portions each should receive. As the mouthpiece of Jehovah, he did, by the spirit of prophecy, announce beforehand what should be the particular estate of each of his two sons and so his words have been fulfilled. Though parents today are not thus supernaturally endowed to foretell the future of their children, nevertheless, it is their duty and privilege to search the Scriptures and ascertain what promises God has left to the righteous *and to their seed*, and plead them before Him.

But seeing Isaac thus spake by the immediate impulse of the Spirit, how can it be said that “by faith” he blessed his sons? This brings in the human side and shows how he discharged his

responsibility. He gathered together and rested upon the promises which God had made to him, both directly, and through Abraham and Rebekah. The principle ones we have already considered. He had been present when the Lord said unto his father what is found in Genesis 22:16-18 and he had himself been made the recipient of the divine promises recorded in Genesis 26:2-4. And now, many years later, we find his heart resting upon what he had heard from God, firmly embracing His promises, and with unshaken confidence announcing the future estates of his distant posterity.

That Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau “concerning things to come,” (Heb 11:20). gives us a striking example of what is said in the opening verse of our chapter. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” “Abraham was now dead, and Isaac was expecting soon to be buried in the grave he had purchased in the land given to him and his seed. There was nothing to be seen for faith to rest on; nothing that gave the smallest ground for hope; nothing to make it even probable (apart from what he had heard and believed) that his descendants, either Jacob or Esau, would ever possess the land which had been promised to them” (E. W. Bullinger, 1837-1913). There was no human probability at the time Isaac spake which could have been the basis of his calculations. All that he said issued from implicit faith in the bare Word of God.

This is the great practical lesson for us to learn here. The strength of Isaac’s faith should stir us up to cry unto God for an increased measure thereof. With most precious confidence Isaac disposed of Canaan as if he already had the peaceable possession of it. Yet, in fact, he owned not an acre of that land and had no human right to anything there save a burying-place. Moreover, at the time he prophesied there was a famine in Canaan and he was in exile in Gerar, “Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee” (Gen 27:29), would, to one that viewed only the outward case of Isaac, seem like empty words. Ah, my brethren, we too ought to be as certain of the blessings to come, which God has promised, as if they were present, even though we see no apparent likelihood of them.

It may be objected against what has been said above, that, from the account which is supplied in Genesis 27, Isaac “blessed” Jacob in ignorance rather than “by faith.” To this it may be replied, first, the object of faith is always God Himself and the ground on which it rests is His revealed will. So in Isaac’s case, his faith was fixed upon the covenant God and was exercised upon His sure Word, and this was by no means negated by his mistaking Jacob for Esau. Second, it illustrates the fact that the faith of God’s people is usually accompanied by some infirmity, in Isaac’s case, his partiality for Esau. Third, after he discovered the deception which had been played upon him, he made no effort to recall the blessing pronounced upon the disguised Jacob—sweetly acquiescing unto the divine sovereignty—but confirming it, and though with tears Esau sought to change his mind, he could not.

Here too we behold the strength of Isaac’s faith. As soon as he perceived the providential hand of God crossing his natural affection, instead of murmuring and rebelling, he yielded and submitted to the Lord. This is ever the work of true faith. It makes the soul yield to God’s will against our fleshly inclinations, as also against the bent of our own reason. Faith knows that God is so great, so powerful, so glorious, that His commands must be obeyed. As it was with Abraham, so in the case of Isaac. Faith viewed the precepts as well as the promise. It moves us to tread the path of obedience. May our faith be more and more evidenced by walking in those good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

# THE LIFE OF DAVID

## 19. His Marriage to Abigail

“Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner” (Pro 11:31). This is a most appropriate verse with which to introduce the passage that is to engage our attention, for each of its clauses receives striking illustration in what is now to be before us. The closing verses of 1 Samuel 25 supply both a blessed and a solemn sequel to what is found earlier in the chapter. There we saw the wicked triumphing and the righteous being oppressed. There we saw the godly wife of the churl, Nabal, graciously and faithfully befriending the outcast David. Here we behold the hand of God’s judgment falling heavily upon the wicked and the hand of His grace rewarding the righteous.

“Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner” (Pro 11:31). Of all the hundreds of Solomon’s inspired proverbs this is the only one in which is prefaced by the word, “Behold.” This at once intimates that a subject of great importance is here in view, bidding us fix the eyes of our mind upon the same with close and admiring attention. That subject is the *providential dealings* of God in human affairs, a subject which has fallen sadly into disfavour during the last two or three generations, and one concerning which much ignorance and error now widely prevails. Three things are clearly signified in Proverb 11:31. First, that God disposes the affairs of all His creatures. Second, that He pleads the cause of the innocent and vindicates His oppressed people. Third, that He plagues and overthrows evil-doers.

Practically all professing Christians believe that there is a *future* day of retribution, when God shall reward the righteous and punish the wicked, but comparatively few believe God *now* does so. Yet the verse with which we have opened expressly declares that, “The righteous shall be recompensed *in the earth*.” It is impossible to read the Scriptures with an unprejudiced mind and not see this truth exhibited in the history of individuals, families, and nations. Cain murdered Abel—a mark was set upon him by God and he cried, “My punishment is greater than I can bear” (Gen 4:13). Noah was a just man and walked with God—he and his family were preserved from the flood. Pharaoh persecuted the Hebrews and is drowned at the Red Sea. Saul thirsts for David’s life and is slain in battle. Of the Lord we must say, “Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Psa 58:11).

And now comes the “Dispensationalist” with his objection. “All that you have said above obtained during the Old Testament dispensation, but in this Christian era it is not so. We are shut up to faith.” How ridiculous. Has God vacated His throne? Is He no longer shaping human affairs? Is His governmental justice no longer operative? Why, the most signal example in all history of God’s “recompensing” the wicked and the sinner in the earth has transpired in this

*Christian* dispensation! It was in A.D. 70 that God publicly executed judgment upon Jerusalem for the Jews' rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah, and the condition of that people throughout the earth ever since has been a perpetual exemplification of this solemn truth. The same principle has been repeatedly manifested in the establishment of Christianity upon the ruins of its oppressors. As to Christians being "shut up to faith," so were the Old Testament saints just as much as we are. See Habakkuk 2:1-4.

But let us note a more formidable objection. Have there not been many righteous souls who were falsely accused, fiercely persecuted, and who were not vindicated on earth by God? Have there not been many of the wicked who have prospered temporally and received no retribution in this life? First, let it be pointed out that God does not always respond immediately. The writer (who is not yet fifty) has lived long enough to see more than one or two people who traded on the Sabbath, oppressed widows, and despised all religion, brought to want. Second, there is a happy medium between denying (on the one hand) that God is not now acting at all in the capacity of Judge and insisting (on the other hand) that *every* man fully reaps in this life what he has sown.

Here, as everywhere, the *truth* lies between two extremes. If God were to visibly reward every righteous act and punish every evil-doer in this life, much of the work pertaining to the great Day of Judgment would be forestalled. But if God never honours in this world those who honour Him or punishes those who openly defy Him, then we should be without any pre-intimations of that Great Assize, other than what is revealed in those Scriptures of truth which very few so much as read. Therefore, in His providential government of the world, God wisely gives sufficiently clear manifestation of His love and righteousness and hatred of unrighteousness, as to leave all without excuse concerning what may be expected when we stand before Him to be fully and finally judged. While there are sufficient cases of godliness apparently passing unrewarded and examples of evil-doers prospering as to leave full room for the exercise of faith that the righteousness of God shall yet be completely vindicated, nevertheless, there are also a sufficient number of clear demonstrations before our eyes of God's vengeance upon the wicked to awe us that *we* sin not.

"And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light" (1Sa 25:36). Recall the circumstances. Only a little while previously, Nabal had offered a gross insult to one who was in dire need and who had several hundred men under his command. Measured by the standards of the world that insult called for retaliation and so felt the one who had received it. David had sworn to revenge himself by slaying Nabal and every male member of his household, and verse 23 makes it plain that he was on his way to exercise that purpose. But for the timely intervention of his wife, Nabal had been engaged in a hopeless fight to preserve his life and here we see him feasting and drunken!

As Abigail furnishes a typical illustration of a needy sinner coming to Christ and being saved by Him (see close of last article), so Nabal affords us a solemn portrayal of one who despises Christ and perished in his sins. Let preachers develop the leading points which we here note down in passing. See the false security of sinners when in dire danger, Ecclesiastes 8:11. Observe how one who grudges to give to God or the relief of His poor will lavishly spend money to satisfy his lusts or make a fair show in the flesh, Luke 16:19-21. O how many there are more concerned about having what they call "a good time," than they are in making their peace with God, Isaiah 55:2. So sottish are some in the indulging of their appetites that they sink lower than the beasts of the field, Isaiah 1:3. It is adding insult to injury when the sinner not only breaks God's laws but abuses His mercies, Luke 14:18-20. Remember people are intoxicated with other things besides "wine"—worldly fame, worldly riches, worldly pleasures.

Yes, the fool Nabal vividly portrays the case of multitudes all around us. The curse of God's broken law hanging over them, yet, "feasting" as though all is well with their souls for eternity. The sword of divine justice already drawn to smite them down, yet their hearts "merry" with "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb 11:25). The water of life neglected, but "drunken" with intoxicating things of this perishing world. A grave awaiting them in a few days' time, but flirting with death during the brief and precious interval. In such a benumbed and giddy state that it would be the casting of pearls before swine for the godly to speak seriously unto them. O how securely the devil holds his victims! O the beguiling and paralyzing effects of sin! O the utterly hopeless condition of the unsaved, unless a sovereign God intervenes, works a miracle of grace, and snatches them as brands from the burning!

"But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone" (1Sa 25:37). The day of danger had been spent in revelling, the night in intoxicated stupefaction, and now he is called, as it were, to account. The sacred narrative records no reproaches that Abigail made. They were not necessary—the guilty conscience of Nabal would perform its own office. Instead, she merely told her husband of what had transpired. Her words at once dispelled his dreams, shattered his peace, and sank his spirits. Most probably, he was overcome with fright, that, notwithstanding his wife's kindly overtures, David would swiftly take vengeance upon him. Filled with bitter remorse, now it was too late to repent, giving way to abject despair, Nabal's heart "became as a stone." See here a picture of the poor worldling when facing death and the terrors of the Almighty overwhelming him. See here the deceitfulness of carnal pleasures—overnight his heart merry with wine, now paralyzed with horror and terror. Yes, the "*end* of that mirth is heaviness" (Pro 14:13). How different the joys which God gives!

"And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died" (1Sa 25:38). What a fearfully solemn termination to a wasted life! Nabal's course was one of folly, his end was that of "the fool." Here was a man "very great" (v. 2), who had boastfully spoken of "*my* bread, *my* flesh, *my* shearers" (v. 11), who had scorned David and spent his time in excessive self-gratification—now arrived at the close of his earthly journey, with nothing before him but "the blackness of darkness forever." He seems to have lain in a senseless stupor for ten days, induced either by the effects of his intoxication, or from the horror and anguish of his mind, and this was completed by the immediate stroke of the power and wrath of God, cutting him off out of the land of the living. Such is, my reader, the doom of every one who despises and rejects Christ as Lord and Saviour.

"And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died" (1Sa 25:38). Not only is the case of Nabal a solemn example of a careless, giddy, reckless sinner, suddenly cut off by God whilst giving himself up to the indulgence of the flesh, when the sword of divine judgment was suspended over his head, but we also see in his death an exhibition of the faithfulness of God, an illustration of Romans 12:19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Not only is it sinful for the saint to avenge himself when unjustly insulted and ill-treated, but it is quite unnecessary. In due time, Another will do it far more effectually for him.

"And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head" (1Sa 25:39). It is not that David was guilty of unholy glee over the wretched end of one who had wronged him, but that he rejoiced in the display of *God's* glory, of the exercise of divine justice, and the triumphing of

piety over iniquity. Therein lies the real key to a number of passages which many of our moderns suppose breathe only a vengeful spirit, as though God erected a lower standard of holiness in Old Testament times than is now given to us. Such was not the case—the law, equally with the Gospel, required *love* for the neighbour.

As this subject has been so sadly wrested by “Dispensationalists,” let us add a few words here. Take for example Psalm 58:10, “The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.” Superficial people say, “But *that* is altogether contrary to the spirit of *this* dispensation!” But read on, “So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Psa 58:11). It was not the exercise of a spirit of malice which took delight in seeing the destruction of *their* foes, no indeed, for in the Old Testament the divine command was, “*Rejoice not* when *thine* enemy falleth” (Pro 24:17). Instead, it was the heart bowing in worship before the governmental dealings of God, adoring that justice which gave unto the wicked their due. And where the heart is not completely under the dominion of maudlin sentimentality, there will be rejoicing *today* when some notoriously wicked character is manifestly cut down by the holy hand of God. So it will be at the end of this dispensation, see Revelation 18:20; 19:1-2.

Ere passing on to the next verses, let us take notice of David’s thankful acknowledgment of God’s restraining grace, “Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath *kept* his servant from evil” (1Sa 25:39). If we carefully reviewed the details of each day, we should frequently find occasion to admire the sin-preventing providences of God. We may well adopt the language of the Psalmist at the close of a beautiful illustration of the divine mercies, “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the LORD” (Psa 107:43). Let us never miss an opportunity of praising God when He graciously keeps us from committing any evil we had premeditated.

“And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife” (1Sa 25:39-40). The stroke of God’s judgment had freed Abigail from a painful situation and now the workings of His providence rewarded her righteousness. God gave her favour in the eyes of His anointed. David was charmed not only with the beauty of her person and the prudence of her character, but also with her evident piety—the most valuable quality of all in a wife. Abigail being now a widow, and David’s own wife living in adultery, he sent messengers with a proposal of marriage to her. This line in the type is strikingly accurate—the Lord Jesus does not court His wife immediately, but employs the ministers of the Gospel, endued with the Holy Spirit, to woo and win sinners to Himself.

“And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord” (1Sa 25:41). Very beautiful is it to see the great modesty and humility with which such a wealthy woman received the advances of David, deeming herself unworthy of such an honour, yea, having such respect for him that she would gladly be one of the meanest servants of his household. She accepted his proposal, and thereby added still another line to this typical picture of conversion—note how in the margin of 2 Chronicles 30:8, faith is represented as to “give the *hand* unto the Lord”!

“And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife” (1Sa 25:42). Most blessed is this. At the time, David was an homeless wanderer, outlawed, yet Abigail was willing not only to forsake her own house and comfortable position, but to share his trials and endure hardships for his sake. Nevertheless, she knew it would be only for a brief season. She married *in*



*faith*, assured of the fulfillment of God's promises (1Sa 25:30) and confident that in due course she would "reign with him"! And this is what true conversion is—a turning of our back upon the old life, willing to suffer the loss of all things for Christ, with faith looking forward to the future.

"David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives. But (or "for") Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim" (1Sa 25:43-44). Polygamy, though not in accord with either the law of nature or the law of God, was a custom which prevailed in those degenerate days, which some good men gave in to, though they are not to be commended for it. In taking Ahinoam of Jezreel to wife (and later several others, 2Sa 3), David followed the corruption of the times, but from the beginning it was not so, nor is it permissible now since Christ has ushered in "the times of reformation" Matthew 19:4-6.

# HEART WORK

## Part One

As well might a poor man expect to be rich in this world without industry, or for a weak man to become strong and healthy without food and exercise, as for a Christian to be rich in faith and strong in the Lord without earnest endeavour and diligent effort. It is true that all our labours amount to nothing unless the Lord bless them (Psa 127:1), as it also is that apart from Him we can do nothing (Joh 15:5). Nevertheless, God places no premium upon sloth and has promised that "the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Pro 13:4). A farmer may be fully persuaded of his own helplessness to make his fields productive, he may realize that their fertility is dependent upon the sovereign will of God, and he may also be a firm believer in the efficacy of prayer, but unless he discharges *his own duty* his barns will be empty. So it is spiritually.

God has not called His people to be drones, nor to maintain an attitude of passiveness. No, He bids them work, toil, labour. The sad thing is that so many of them are engaged in the wrong task or at least, giving most of their attention to that which is incidental and neglecting that which is essential and fundamental. "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Pro 4:23). This is the great task which God has assigned unto each of His children. But O how sadly is the heart neglected! Of all their concerns and possessions, the *least* diligence is used by the vast majority of professing Christians in the keeping of their hearts. So long as they safeguard their other interests—their reputations, their bodies, their positions in the world—the heart may be left to take its own course.

As the heart in our physical body is the center and fountain of life, because from it blood circulates into every part, conveying with it either health or disease, so it is with us spiritually. If our heart be the residence of impiety, pride, avarice, malice, impure lusts, then the whole current of our lives will largely be tainted with these vices. If they are admitted there and prevail for a season, then our character and conduct will be proportionately affected. Therefore, the citadel of the heart needs above all things to be well guarded that it may not be seized by those numerous

and watchful assailants which are ever attacking it. This spring needs to be well protected that its waters be not poisoned.

The man is what his heart is. If *this* be dead to God, then nothing in him is alive. If *this* be right with God, all will be right. As the mainspring of a watch sets all its wheels and parts in motion, so as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro 23:7). If the heart be right, the actions will be. As a man’s heart is, such is his state now and will be hereafter. If it be regenerated and sanctified, there will be a life of faith and holiness in this world, and everlasting life will be enjoyed in the world to come. Therefore, “Rather look to the cleansing of thine heart, than to the cleansing of thy well; rather look to the feeding of thine heart, than to the feeding of thy flock; rather look to the defending of thy heart, than to the defending of thy house; rather look to the keeping of thine heart, than to the keeping of thy money” (Peter Moffett, 1570).

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). The “heart” is here put for our whole inner being, the “hidden man of the heart” (1Pe 3:4). It is that which controls and gives character to all that we do. To “keep”—garrison or guard—the heart or soul is the great work which God has assigned us. The enablement is His, but the duty is ours. We are to keep the imagination from vanity, the understanding from error, the will from perverseness, the conscience clear of guilt, the affections from being inordinate and set on evil objects, the mind from being employed on worthless or vile subjects. The whole from being possessed by Satan. This, this is the work to which God has called us.

Rightly did the Puritan John Flavel (1630-1691) say, “The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition is the great business of a Christian’s life.” Now to “keep” the heart right implies that it has been *set right*. Thus it was at regeneration, when it was given a new spiritual bent. True conversion is the heart turning from Satan’s control to God’s, from sin to holiness, from the world to Christ. To *keep* the heart right signifies the constant care and diligence of the renewed to preserve his soul in that holy frame to which grace has reduced it and daily strives to hold it. “Hereupon do all events depend: the heart being kept, the whole course of our life here will be according to the mind of God, and the end of it will be the enjoyment of Him hereafter. This being neglected, life will be lost, both here as unto obedience, and hereafter as to glory” (John Owen in “Causes of Apostasy,” 1616-1683).

1. To “keep” the heart means *striving to shut out from it all that is opposed to God*. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1Jo 5:21). God is a jealous God and will brook no rival. He claims the throne of our hearts and requires to be loved by us supremely. When, then, we perceive our affections being inordinately drawn out unto any earthly object, we are to fight against it, and “resist the devil.” When Paul said, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: All things are lawful for me, but I will not be *brought under the power* of any” (1Co 6:12), he signifies that he was keeping his heart diligently, that he was jealous lest *things* should gain that esteem and place in his soul which was due alone unto the Lord. A very small object placed immediately before the eye is sufficient to shut out the light of the sun and trifling things taken up by the affections may soon sever communion with the Holy One.

Before regeneration, our hearts were deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). That was because the evil principle, the “flesh,” had complete dominion over them. But inasmuch as “the flesh” remains in us after conversion, and is constantly striving for the mastery over “the spirit,” the Christian needs to exercise a constant watchful jealousy over his heart, mindful of its readiness to be imposed upon and its proneness unto a compliance with temptations. All the avenues to the heart need to be carefully guarded so that nothing hurtful enters therein, particularly against vain thoughts and imaginations, and especially in those seasons

when they are most apt to gain an advantage. For if injurious thoughts are suffered to gain an inroad into the mind, if we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, then in vain shall we hope to be “spiritually minded” (Rom 8:6). All such thoughts are only making provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Thus, for the Christian to “keep” his heart with all diligence, means for him to pay close attention to the direction in which his affections are moving, to discover whether the things of the world are gaining a firmer and fuller hold over him, or whether they are increasingly losing their charm for him. God has exhorted us, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2), and the heeding of this injunction calls for constant examination of the heart to discover whether or not it is becoming more and more dead unto this deceitful and perishing world, and whether heavenly things are those in which we find our chief and greatest delight. “Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart” (Deu 4:9).

2. To “keep” the heart means *striving to bring it into conformity with the Word*. We are not to rest content until an actual image of its pure and holy teachings is stamped upon it. Alas, so many today are just *playing* with the solemn realities of God, allowing them to flit across their fancy, but never embracing and making them their own. Why is it, dear reader, that those solemn impressions you had when hearing a searching sermon or reading a searching article, so quickly faded away? Why did not those holy feelings and aspirations which were stirred within you last? Why have they borne no fruit? Was it not because you failed to see that your heart was duly affected by them? You failed to “hold fast” that which you had “received and heard” (Rev 3:3), and in consequence, your heart became absorbed again in “the cares of this life” or “the deceitfulness of riches,” and thus the Word was choked.

It is not enough to hear or read a powerful message from one of God’s servants, and to be deeply interested and stirred by it. If there be no diligent effort on thy part, then it will be said, “Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hos 6:4). What, then, is required? This, earnest and persevering prayer that God will fasten the message in your soul as “a nail in a sure place,” (Isa 22:23) so that the devil himself cannot catch it away. What is required? This—“Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luk 2:19). Things which are not duly pondered are soon forgotten. Meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating. What is required? This—that you promptly put into practice what you have learned. Walk according to the light God has given or it will quickly be taken from you, Luke 8:18.

Not only must the outward actions be regulated by the Word, but the heart must also be conformed thereto. It is not enough to abstain from murder, the causeless anger must be put away. It is not enough to abstain from the act of adultery, the inward lust must be mortified, too (Mat 5:28). God not only takes note of and keeps a record of all our external conduct, but He “weigheth the spirits” (Pro 16:2). Everything is naked and open before Him with whom we have to do (Heb 4:13). Not only so, He requires *us* to scrutinize the springs from which our actions proceed, to examine our motives, to ponder *the spirit* in which we act. God requireth truth—that is, sincerity (reality)—in “the inward parts” (Psa 51:6). Therefore does He command us, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23).

3. To “keep” the heart means *to preserve it tender unto sin*. The unregenerate man makes little or no distinction between sin and crime. So long as he keeps within the law of the land and maintains a reputation for respectability among his fellows, he is, generally speaking, quite satisfied with himself. But it is far otherwise with one who has been born again. He has been awakened to the fact that he has to do with *God* and must yet render a full account unto Him. He

makes conscience of a hundred things which the unconverted never trouble themselves about. When the Holy Spirit first convicted him, he was made to feel that his whole life had been one of rebellion against God, of pleasing himself. The consciousness of this pierced him to the very quick. His inward anguish far exceeded any pains of body or sorrow occasioned by temporal losses. He saw himself to be a spiritual leper and hated himself for it, and mourned bitterly before God. He cried, "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" (Psa 51:9-10).

Now it is the duty of the Christian, and part of the task which God has set him, to see to it that this sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin be not lost. He is to labour daily that his heart be duly affected by the heinousness of self-will and self-love. He is to steadfastly resist every effort of Satan to pity himself, to think lightly of wrong doing, or to excuse himself in the same. He is to live in the constant realization that the eye of God is ever upon him, so that when tempted he will say with Joseph, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9). He is to view sin in the light of the cross, daily reminding himself that it was *his* iniquities which caused the Lord of glory to be made a curse for him. Employing the dying love of Christ as a motive why he must not allow himself in anything that is contrary to the holiness and obedience which the Saviour asks from all His redeemed.

Ah, my Christian reader, it is no child's play to "keep the heart with all diligence." The easy-going religion of our day will never take its devotees (or rather, its *victims*!) to heaven. The question has been asked, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or *who* shall stand in his holy place?" (Psa 24:3) and plainly has the question been answered by God Himself, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" etc. (Psa 24:4). Equally plain is the teaching of the New Testament, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for *they* shall see God" (Mat 5:8). A "pure heart" is one that hates sin, which makes conscience of sin, which grieves over it, which strives against it. A "pure heart" is one that seeks to keep undefiled the temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling place of Christ (Eph 3:17).

4. To "keep" the heart means to *look diligently after its cleansing*. Perhaps some of our readers often find themselves sorrowfully crying, "O the vileness of my heart!" Thank God, if He *has* discovered this to you. If such be so, and you really feel it, it is clear proof that He has made you to differ from the multitudes of blindly-indifferent professing Christians all around you. But, dear friend, there is no sufficient reason why your "heart" should *continue* to be vile. You might lament that your garden was overgrown with weeds and filled with rubbish, but need it remain so? We speak now not of your sinful *nature*, the incurable and unchangeable "flesh" which still indwells you, but of your *heart*, which God bids you "keep." You *are* responsible to purge your mind of vain imaginations, your soul of unlawful affections, your conscience of guilt.

But, alas, you say, "I have no control over such things. They come unbidden and I am powerless to prevent them." So the devil would have you believe! Revert again to the analogy of your garden. Do not the weeds spring up unbidden. Do not the slugs and other pests seek to prey upon the plants? What, then? Do you merely bewail your helplessness? No, you resist them and take means to keep them under. Thieves enter houses uninvited, but whose fault is it if the doors and windows be left unfastened? O heed not the seductive lullabies of Satan. God says, "Purify your hearts, ye double minded" (Jam 4:8), that is, one mind for Him and another for self—one for holiness and another for the pleasures of sin.

But *how* am I to "purify" my heart? By vomiting up the foul things taken into it—shamefacedly owning them before God, repudiating them, turning from them with loathing, and it is written, "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). By daily renewing our exercise of repentance, and *such* repentance as is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 7:11, “For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” By the daily exercise of faith (Act 15:9), appropriating afresh the cleansing blood of Christ, bathing every night in that “fountain” which has been opened “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1), by treading the path of God’s commandments, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1Pe 1:22).

We close this first article by pointing out, what is obvious to every Christian reader, namely, that such a task calls for divine aid. Help and grace need to be earnestly and definitely sought of the Holy Spirit each day. We should bow before God and in all simplicity say, “Lord, Thou requirest me to keep my heart with all diligence, and I feel utterly incompetent for such a task, such a work lies altogether beyond my poor feeble powers. Therefore, I humbly ask Thee in the name of Christ to graciously grant unto me supernatural strength to do as Thou hast bidden me. Lord, work in me both to will and to do of Thy good pleasure.”

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 3. The Church of God (Concluded)

In the last article, we furnished proof that “the Church of God” (in such passages as Act 20:28) and “God’s elect” (in such passages as Rom 8:33) comprise identically the same persons and inasmuch as Abraham (Isa 51:2), Isaac, and Jacob (Rom 9:7, 13) were among God’s elect, *they* were most certainly members of the Church. Nor has this ever been denied throughout the long centuries of this Christian era (so far as we are aware), until the “dispensationalists” came on the scene and sought to confuse the simple. Both appellations view the saints in their relation *to God*, His chosen and called out people. When the same individuals are designated the Church, which is Christ’s body, they are contemplated in relation *to Christ as their Head* and He is a “Head” of dignity (supremacy), authority, and influence, as the physical head is in the human body.

The Church, which is the body of Christ, comprises all who are federally and vitally united to Him. As the last Adam, He was the federal Head of the entire election of grace, and as such He is a “quickening Spirit” unto them. In Ephesians 5:23, we are told that “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body,” which unmistakably proves that His Headship and Saviourhood are of equal extent, and that all who are saved by Him out of Adam’s fallen and ruined race, belong to and are members of His Church. If then, Abel, Enoch, and Noah were saved by God (their sins remitted, their persons justified, their souls regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit, and made joint-heirs with Christ—as they most certainly were) on the ground of the

retrospective merits of Christ's satisfaction, then *they* are just as truly members of the body of Christ as Paul and the Philippian jailer, who were saved by God on the ground of the prospective value of Christ's atonement.

Not only were the Old Testament saints gathered into and united unto the Church, which is the body of Christ, but they themselves *knew* this as truly as do the saints of today. A clear proof of this is furnished in Hebrews 11:24-26. How could Moses esteem "the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," if he had been in total ignorance of "Christ"? But what is meant here by "Christ," or rather "the Christ" as it is in the Greek, and so rendered in Bagster's International and margin of the Revised Version? We answer, precisely the same as in Galatians 3:16, "the Christ" personal *and* "the Christ" mystical. Moses esteemed the "reproach" which would follow both on account of his faith in the person of Christ *and* his fellowship with His suffering members greater riches than the transitory and perishing riches of Egypt, "*for* he had respect unto the recompense of the reward," that is, the *eternal* reward or "inheritance."

While allowing the *double* reference to "the Christ" in Hebrews 11:26—for really the Head and the Body cannot be separated, though they may be viewed distinctly—yet *the principal* allusion is undoubtedly unto the *mystical* Christ, the Church which is His body. This is clear from a comparison of verses 25 and 26, which are obviously parallel and explanatory of one another. In the former, we are told that Moses "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Thus, there is a threefold parallelism—the "reproach" of verse 26 agrees with and is interpreted by the "suffering affliction" of verse 25. The "Christ" of verse 26 corresponds with and is defined by "the people of God" in verse 25, and the "treasures in Egypt" balances with the "pleasures of sin," while the "pleasures of sin *for a season*" (v. 25) is set over against the "recompense of the reward" (v. 26), which consists of those "pleasures" which are at God's right hand "*forever more*" (Psa 16:11).

From what has just been before us, no man can fairly deny that the "people of God" of Hebrews 11:25 are, by the Holy Spirit, expressly designated "the Christ" in verse 26, which is the very title given to the Church in 1 Corinthians 12:12! Nor can it be truly gainsaid that the Church or mystical body of Christ is synonymous with "the people of God." Thus, it unequivocally follows that the true (in contrast from the nominal—just as we now distinguish between genuine and nominal "Christians") "people of God" in the entire Old Testament era belong to and were members of the mystical Christ. In perfect accord with this we find Stephen, "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Act 6:5), speaking of "THE CHURCH in the wilderness" (Act 7:38). This is the more striking in view of the immediate context, where Stephen quoted from Deuteronomy 18:15, "A prophet shall the LORD your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; [Moses]; him shall ye hear" (Act 7:37). This is He that was IN *the church* in the wilderness.

What could be more plain and more certain than what has just been before us? In view of the same, what shall be thought of such a statement as that made by A. C. Gaebelein in his notes on Matthew 16:18, "The Lord's speaking of the church as *to be built* upon this rock, makes it clear that there was no church in existence up to that time. It is therefore all wrong to speak, as it is done so often, of the Old Testament Church. There was no such institution in Old Testament times." Such men (and all who echo their anti-scriptural teaching) will yet have to answer to God for belying His Holy Word.

Another passage which clearly sets forth the relation of *Christ* unto the Old Testament saints is 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto

Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual ROCK that followed them: and that ROCK was Christ.” So definite and decisive is the testimony of those verses, we refrain from making any comment upon them, except to urge the reader to prayerfully heed the opening words thereof and no longer “be ignorant” of that blessed fact.

As to how long *the knowledge of Christ’s relation to them, and their relation to Christ*, was retained by the Old Testament saints, we may not be able to fully show. False prophets abounded then as they do now. All sorts of novelties were introduced and at various periods error was rampant. Thus it became necessary for God to raise up man after man, bidding His people inquire for “the *old paths*” (Jer 6:16), just as it has now become necessary for such articles as these to be written, if the cloud of dust is to be cleared away which the “dispensationalists” have raised and which has beclouded the vision of so many. But certain it is that the Old Testament *saints* were far from being the ignoramuses which so many of our conceited moderns declare they were. The path of the just has always been “as the shining light” (Pro 4:18)—not as candle dimness!—though it is admittedly shone “more and more” as the “perfect day” drew nearer.

We must not fail to notice the particular passages to which the “dispensationalists” appeal, supposing that they support their ridiculous contention that the mystical body of Christ never existed before the day of Pentecost. But before examining those verses, let it be pointed out that the Word of God does not contradict itself. It is impossible that Acts 7:38 should speak of “the church in the wilderness,” and then one of the epistles declare there *was* no Church in Old Testament times. Let it be further pointed out it is axiomatic that whenever a truth or fact has been definitely established, no objection can possibly overthrow it. For example, if it be demonstrated that there is a soul dwelling within the body, my inability to show how that which is immaterial can act upon and be counter-influenced by that which is material, does not disprove its existence. Hence, were we unable to satisfactorily explain the verses which are to come before us, this would by no means annul all that which has been so clearly and abundantly proven.

“Upon this rock I will build my church” (Mat 16:18). From Christ’s use of the future tense here, it has been inferred that He had no “church” up to that time. But the difficulty (if “difficulty” it be) is at once removed when the remainder of the sentence be read, “*And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” Two things are there evident. First, that our Lord was *not* here speaking of His “church” in its highest character (that is, viewed as His body and bride), but in its economical state here on earth—the Church “militant,” for it would be superfluous to speak about the “gates of hell” not prevailing against the Church “triumphant.”

Second, Christ had before Him the *new constitution* of the membership of His Church upon earth, which the abolishing of Judaism and the institution of Christianity necessarily entailed. “God had a church in the world from the beginning, and it was built upon the promised Seed (Gen 3:15), but now that promised Seed was come, it was requisite the Church should have *a new charter*, as Christian, and standing in relation to a Christ already come. Now here we have that Charter” (Matthew Henry on Mat 16:18). That no *new* Church was instituted by the Lord Jesus is very plain from Hebrews 2:12, where the Holy Spirit quotes the Saviour’s words from Psalm 22:22, and designated the “congregation of the LORD” the “church”! To this it should be added that, when Christ said, “on this Rock I will *build* my church,” it is evident He was referring to the assembly under the figure of the “House” (Heb 3:6) and “Temple” (2Co 6:16), rather than the “Body”—the “rock” foundation suiting the former, but not the latter. Now the “House” of God

was not some new thing begun at Pentecost, as may be seen from such scriptures as Psalm 127:1; Proverbs 9:1; Song of Solomon 2:4; Matthew 10:25.

Further proof that the Church to which the New Testament saints belonged is *not* peculiar to this Christian dispensation, is found in Hebrews 12:22-23. We cannot now give a detailed examination of the passage, but must defer this until we reach it (D.V.) in the course of our exposition of that epistle. Suffice it now to point out, in that chapter the Holy Spirit draws a series of contrasts between that which characterized Judaism as such (vv. 18-21) and that which pertained to Christianity (vv. 22-24). The apostle was assuring the Hebrew saints (3:1) that in refusing to return unto an apostate system which God had now abandoned, and by remaining loyal to Christ, they lost nothing, but gained everything, for under the new covenant they had the substance of all that was shadowed out under the old covenant. By virtue of their union to Christ, they had “come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”—three names for Christ’s mystical body, viewed in different relations and were connected with the whole body of the faithful. They had “come to...the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven”—the “general assembly” obviously denoting the entire election of grace, which is confirmed by “which are written in heaven.” Compare Exodus 32:32; Isaiah 4:3; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3.

The next passage which is appealed to by those who teach that the “church” was born on the day of Pentecost is 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” There is nothing whatever in this which favors, to the slightest degree, the absurd notion of the “Dispensationalists.” In that verse, the apostle is simply advancing *proof* of what he had affirmed in verse 12, where he had said, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” In that twelfth verse, he illustrates the truth taught in the context—every organism is characterized by diversity and unity, that is, the uniting of different parts so as to form one body.

In the church at Corinth, there was a great variety of gifts, such variety as is to be found in the different members of the human body. Nevertheless, despite the diversity of its members, the physical body is a unit, an organic whole. Moreover, such diversity is essential unto its unity, for unless the physical organism *has* many members, it would not be a *body*. So also is the “Christ,” the Church—it has many members, among which are marked varieties and gifts but just as one soul animates the entire physical body, so does one Spirit the Church. “*For by one Spirit are we [“were we”] all baptized into one body*” (1Co 12:13). Observe it is *not* said, “all baptized *at the same time*,” *no* “Gentiles” were baptized by the Spirit! The reference is to a common operation of the Spirit upon *all* of God’s elect, from Abel onwards. The “baptized” signifies *regenerated*, by which each saint becomes *manifestatively* a member of the body of Christ. The “drinking into one Spirit” refers to His sanctifying influences and gifts—faith, hope, love.

The third passage which is appealed to by those who deny Christ had any Church before Pentecost, is Ephesians 1:19-23. From these verses it is pointed out that God gave Christ to be “head over all things to the church which is His body” *after* His ascension. It might just as well be argued that none had their sins remitted before Christ made atonement at the cross, or that none were regenerated until He was made a “quickening Spirit” consequent upon His resurrection. Or, with as good effect might it be said, that Christ could not make intercession nor act as the Advocate of His people before he sat down at God’s right hand, which is plainly refuted by Zechariah 1:12-13 and 3:1-2! In the purpose of the Triune JEHOVAH, the God-man Mediator was “set up (or “anointed”) from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Pro



8:23). In their jumbled ideas upon Ephesians 1:19-23, these “rightly dividers” *fail* to “divide” or distinguish between Christ as the *virtual* Head of His people from the beginning, because “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” and Christ as the *actual* Head after He became *historically* incarnate.

But the favorite passage of these heretics which we are now refuting is Ephesians 3:3-9, with which may be linked Romans 16:25 and Colossians 1:26. A very few words may suffice to point out the perfect consistency between these verses and all that has been said above. The “mystery” in all of them has reference to the counsels of divine grace in the everlasting covenant concerning the whole company of the elect. Those counsels of grace *were* “revealed” in the Old Testament, but largely so under types and shadows, by means of hints and obscure prophecies, and not so clearly and fully “*as it is now revealed...by the Spirit*” (Eph 3:5) through the Gospel. Moreover, the earliest and partial revelation found in the Old Testament Scriptures was confined unto one nation, and “not made known unto *the sons of men*” (Eph 3:5), whereas the New Testament revelation is “made known to *all nations*” (Rom 16:26), so that “*all*” may see it (Eph 3:9).

We have now noticed all the passages (so far as we are aware) appealed to by those who deny that the mystical Body, or Church of Christ, existed in Old Testament times, but none of them give the slightest countenance to any such contention. The margin of Daniel 7:18 expressly refers to “the saints of *the high places*,” which is parallel with Ephesians 1:3 and Hebrews 3:1. Ephesians 2:11-13 and 19-22 plainly declare that God’s elect from the Gentiles, so far from constituting a *new* Body, are now made “fellow-citizens with the saints,” which can *only* mean the Old Testament saints, being “built upon the foundation of the apostles *and prophets*. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom *all the building* [Old and New Testament saints] fitly framed *together* groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.” We therefore affirm that, in their fantastical efforts to “rightly divide” the Word of God, Dispensationalists have wrongly divided the family of God, and that so far from maintaining the “unity of the Spirit,” have represented Him as being the Author of confusion. The “new Jerusalem” not only has the names of the twelve apostles in its foundations (Rev 21:14), but it also has on its gates the names “of the twelve tribes of Israel” (Rev 21:12)!!

# THE CHRISTIAN’S ARMOUR—PART 1

(Part 2 in July Issue)

Ephesians 6:10-18

In the passage which is to be before us, the apostle gathers up the whole previous subject of the epistle into an urgent reminder of the solemn conditions under which the Christian’s life is lived. By a graphic figure he shows that the Christian’s life is lived on the battlefield, for we are

not only pilgrims but soldiers. We are not only in a foreign country, but in the enemy's land. Though the redemption which Christ has purchased for His people be free and full, yet between the beginning of its application to us and the final consummation of it, there is a terrible and protracted conflict through which we have to pass. This is not merely a figure of speech, but a grim reality. Though salvation is free, yet it is not obtained without great effort. The fight to which God's children are called in this life is one in which Christians themselves receive many sore wounds and thousands of professors are slain. Now, as we shall see in the verses which follow, the apostle warns us that the conflict has to do with more than human foes—the enemies we have to meet are superhuman ones and therefore in order to successfully fight against them we need supernatural strength.

We must remember that the Christian belongs to the spiritual realm as well as the natural, and so he has spiritual as well as natural foes, and hence he needs spiritual strength as well as physical. Therefore the apostle begins here by saying, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph 6:10). The word "finally" denotes that the apostle had reached his closing exhortation and the words "be strong" link up with what immediately proceeds as well as with what now follows. Some of you will remember that the whole of the fifth and opening verses of the sixth chapters are filled with exhortations. Exhortations that pertain to each aspect of the Christian life. Exhortations to regulate him in the home, in business, in the world. Those exhortations are addressed to the husband, wife, child, master, servant, and in order for the Christian to obey them he needs to be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Thus, the call which is given in verse 10 is not only an introduction to what follows, but is also closely related to that which precedes.

"Finally, my brethren"—after all the Christian duties I have set before you in the previous verses, now—"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The words "Be strong" mean to muster strength for the conflict and be strong "in the Lord" signifies we must seek that strength from the only source from which we can obtain it. Note carefully it is not "be strong *from* the Lord," nor is it "be strengthened *by* the Lord." No, it is "be strong *in* the Lord." Perhaps you will get the thought if I use this analogy. Just as a thumb that is amputated is useless and just as a branch cut off from the vine withers, so a Christian whose fellowship with the Lord has been broken is in a strengthless, fruitless, useless state. Thus, "be strong in the Lord" means first of all, see to it that you maintain a live practical relationship to and remain in constant communion with the Lord. Just as my arm must be a part of, a member, in my body, if it is to be vitalized and fitted to perform its functions, so I must be in real touch with the Lord, in daily communion with Him, in living contact—not in theory, but in *actual* experience. It is deeply important that we should, ere we proceed farther, grasp the exhortation found in verse 10, otherwise there will be no strength for the conflict.

"Be strong in the Lord *and* in the power of his might" (Eph 6:10). At first sight there seems to be a needless repetition there, but it is not so. A soldier not only needs strength of body for the carrying of his heavy weapons, for the strain of long marches, and for the actual fighting, but he also needs *courage*. A powerful giant who is a coward would make no sort of soldier. The two chief things which are needed for one engaged in fighting are strength and courage, or vitality and a brave heart, and that is what is in view in verse 10—the last clause brings in the thought of boldness. "Be strong"—in faith, in hope, in wisdom, in patience, in fortitude, in every Christian grace. To be strong in grace, is to be weak in sin. It is vitally essential to remember that we need to have our strength and courage renewed daily. Be strong in the Lord. Seek His strength at the beginning of each day—"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength" (Isa 40:31).

God does not impart strength to us wholesale. He will not give me strength on Monday morning to last through the week. No, there has to be the *renewing* of our strength and that strength has to be drawn from the Lord by the actings of faith, appropriating from *His* “fullness.” The enemies we have to contend with cannot be overcome by human wisdom and might. Unless we go forth to the conflict continually looking to Christ for all needed supplies of grace, deriving all our vitality from Him, we are sure to be defeated.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11). Our first need is to stir up ourselves to *resist* temptation by a believing reliance upon God’s all-sufficient grace, that is, obtaining from Him the strength which will enable us to go forth and fight against the foe. Our second greatest need is to be *well armed* for the conflict into which we must daily enter. *This* is the relation between verses 10 and 11—“Be strong in the Lord” and “Put on the whole armour of God.” First, stir up yourselves to resist temptation, seeking strength at the beginning of the day for the conflict. Then see to it that you take unto yourselves, put on, the whole armour of God.

The Christian is engaged *in a warfare*. There is a fight before him, hence armour is urgently needed. It is impossible for us to stand against the wiles of the devil unless we avail ourselves of the provisions which God has made for enabling us *to* stand. Observe it is called “the armour of God.” Just as the strength we need, comes not from ourselves, but must be supplied by the Lord, so our means of defense lie not in our own powers and faculties, but only as they are quickened by God. It is called the “armour of God” because *He* both provides and bestows it, for we have none of our own, and yet, while this armour is of God’s providing and bestowing, *we* have to “put it on”! God does not fit it on us. He places it before us and it is *our* responsibility, duty, task, to *put on* the whole armour of God. I may say that this same figure of “the armour” is used three times in the epistles of Paul and I believe we find in them a reference to the Trinity. I think the “armour of righteousness” (2Co 6:7) looks more particularly unto Christ. The “armour of light” (Rom 13:12) more especially to the Holy Spirit, who is the One that immediately illuminates us. And the “armour of God” unto the the Father, who is the Provider of it.

Now it is very important we should recognize that this term “armour” is a figurative one, a metaphor, and refers not to something which is material or carnal. It is a figurative expression denoting the Christian’s *graces*. The various parts of the armour represent the different spiritual graces which are to protect his varied faculties and when we are told to “put on” the armour, it simply means we are to call into exercise and action our graces. Notice, “Put on *the whole* armour of God,” that is, avoiding the snares of the devil, or to drop the figure, so exercise all the Christian graces that no part of the soul is exposed unto the enemy. Those who wish to approve themselves of being in possession of grace, must see to it that they have all the graces of a saint. “Put on the whole armour of God, that [in order that] ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11). There is no standing against him if we are not armoured, or to drop the figure, there is no success in resisting the devil if our graces be not in exercise. On the other hand, there is no failing and falling before him if our graces are healthy and active.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). The opening “For” has the force of “Because.” The apostle is advancing a reason, which virtually amounts to an argument, so as to enforce the exhortation just given. Because we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, not against puny human enemies no stronger than ourselves, but against powers and rulers of the darkness of this world, therefore the panoply of God is essential. That is brought in to emphasize the terribleness of the conflict before us. It is

no imaginary one and no ordinary foes we have to meet, but spiritual, superhuman, invisible ones. Those enemies seek to destroy faith and produce doubt. They seek to destroy hope and produce despair. They seek to destroy humility and produce pride. They seek to destroy peace and produce bitterness and malice. They seek to prevent our enjoyment of heavenly things by getting us unduly occupied with earthly things. Their attack is not upon the body, but upon the soul.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph 6:10). The opening “Wherefore” means, in view of the fact that we wrestle against these powerful superhuman, invisible foes, who hate us with a deadly hatred and are seeking to destroy us, therefore appropriate and use the provision which God has made, so that we may stand and withstand. The first clause of verse 13 explains the opening words of verse 11. Verse 11 says “put on,” make use of all proper defensives and weapons for repulsing the attacks and the 13th says “take unto you the whole armour of God.” We “put on” by taking it “unto us,” that is, by appropriation, by making it our own. “That ye may be able to withstand.” To *withstand* is the opposite of yielding, of being tripped up, thrown down, by the devil’s temptations. It means that we stand our ground, strive against and resist the devil. “That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” The “*stand*” is the opposite of a slothful sleep or a cowardly flight. We have that illustrated in the case of the apostles. In Gethsemane *they* did not “stand,” but lay down and slept at the post of duty. No wonder that a little later they all “forsook him and fled” (Mat 26:56)!

I want you to notice that we are not here told to *advance*. We are only ordered to “stand.” God has not called His people to an aggressive war upon Satan, to invade his territory, and seek to wrest from him what is His, but He has told us to occupy the ground which He has allotted us. I want you to see what would have been implied had this verse said, “Take unto you the whole armour of God, and advance upon the devil, storm his strongholds, liberate his prisoners.” But not so. The Lord has given no charge or commission to the rank and file of His people to engage in what is now called “personal work,” soul winning, “rescuing the perishing.” Indeed He has not. The work of preaching the Gospel *belongs alone* unto His own personally called and divinely equipped servants or ministers. All such feverish activities of the flesh as we now behold in the religious world, find no place in this divine exhortation “having done all, to *stand*.” This is the third time in these verses the Spirit of God has repeated that word, “Stand”—not advance, not rush hither and thither, like a crazy person. “Stand therefore” is *all* God has told us to do in our conflict with the devil.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph 6:14). Now that brings before us the first of the seven pieces of the Christian’s Armour which is mentioned in the passage. First, let me warn you against the carnalization of this word, thinking of something that is external, visible, or tangible. The figure of the “girdle” is taken from a well-known custom in Oriental countries, where the people all wear long flowing outer garments reaching to the feet, which would impede their actions when walking, working or fighting. The first thing a person does there, when about to be active, is to gird up around his waist that outer garment which trails to the ground. When the garment is not girded and hangs down it indicates the person is at rest. To “gird up” is therefore the opposite of sloth and ease, following the line of least resistance. Be girded about with a girdle of truth. I believe there is a double reference or meaning here in the word “truth.” But first of all, I want to take up *what it is* that we need to “gird.”

The breastplate is for the heart, the helmet for the head, what, then, is the “girdle” for? In that from which the figure is borrowed, the reference is to *the waist* or loins. But what does that metaphor denote? Plainly, the center or mainspring of all our activities. And what is that?

Obviously, it is *the mind*. The mind is the mainspring of action—first the thought and then the carrying out of it. 1 Peter 1:13 helps us here, “Gird up the loins *of your mind*.” “Having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph 6:14). It is not so much our embracing the truth, as the truth embracing us. Thus, the spiritual reference is to *the holding in and regulation of the thoughts of the mind*. The mind “girded up” means a mind which is disciplined. The opposite of one where the thoughts are allowed to run loose and wild. Again, the “loins” are the place of strength, so is the mind. If we allow our thoughts and imaginations to run wild, we will have no communion with God and no power against Satan. If our thoughts are not brought into captivity, in obedience to Christ, the devil will soon gain a hold over us.

“Having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph 6:14). I think the word “truth” has reference, in the first place, to the Word of God, “Thy word is *truth*” (Joh 17:17). *That* is what must regulate the mind, control the thoughts, subdue the imaginations. There must be a knowledge of, faith in, love for, subjection to, God’s Word. “Stand therefore, having your loins (your mind) girt about with *truth*” (v. 14). Now that suggests to us the characteristic quality of the adversary against whom we are called upon to arm. Satan is a liar and we can only meet him with the truth. Satan prevails over ignorance by means of guile or deceit, but he has no power over those whose minds are regulated by the truth of God. “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Joh 8:31-32)—“free” from the toils, the power, the deceptions of Satan.

I think the word “truth” here has a second meaning. Take for example Psalm 51:6, God “desirest truth in the inward parts.” “Truth” there signifies reality, sincerity. Truth is the opposite of hypocrisy, pretense, unreality. That is why the girdle of truth comes first, because if *it* be lacking, everything else is vain and useless. The strength of every grace lies in *the sincerity* of it. In 1 Timothy 1:5, we read of “faith unfeigned,” which means true, genuine, real faith, in contrast from a faith which is only theoretical, notional, lifeless, inoperative—a faith which utterly withers before the fires of testing.

“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ *in sincerity*” (Eph 6:24). That is another discriminating verse, distinguishing between a real and false love, a true and faithless love. There are thousands of Protestants who have a similar love for Christ as Romanists have for His mother, Mary. It is merely a natural love, a fleshly sentiment, a carnal emotion. But genuine, spiritual love for Him, strives to *please* Him. It is an intensely practical thing, a principle of holy obedience. O how we need to *examine* our graces and test them by Scripture, to see whether *our* faith and love be genuine. We repeat that, reality and sincerity are the strengths of every Christian grace. That is why the girdle of truth comes first in the different pieces of armour.

The girdle of truth (corresponding to the military belt of the warrior) signifies, then, the mind being regulated by the Word of God and guarded by real sincerity, and this alone will protect us against Satan’s temptations unto slackness, of guile, and hypocrisy. Only as this is “put on” by us, shall we be able to “*stand* against the wiles of the devil.” To “stand” is to so “resist” him that he does not throw us down. To “put on” the girdle of truth means applying the Word to the first movements of our minds. This is where Eve failed. She had received the Word, but not in the love of it. Instead of resisting the devil, she parleyed with him. Instead of the truth bridling her imaginations and desires, she cast it from her. How different with Christ! When Satan approached Him, He *was* girded with the girdle of truth. His thoughts were regulated by the Word and there was an absolute sincerity Godwards.

(Completed in the JULY issue.)

# WELCOME TIDINGS

“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God” (2Co 4:15). In the context, the apostle speaks of the divine power which had so mightily sustained him under afflictions and trials. Here he expresses the fact that in so richly enduing the servants of Christ, God displays His love unto His people at large, and this, that the abundant grace bestowed upon them, may stir up many to praise Him for the benefits received through their ministry. Through His chosen ministers, the saints are edified that God may be glorified. We sincerely trust that what follows may evoke Thanksgiving from hundreds of our readers. Following our annual custom we select excerpts from the many letters received.

“I thank you for the Studies. I receive much help and blessing through them, although they are very heart-searching and make me feel how far off I am from what the Lord would have me be. How much I need to watch and pray, and seek grace from Him to live a life that will glorify Him” (Sister in PA). “Most of your writings have been of a searching character, but unless we are willing to be searched and emptied of sin and self, the Lord will not fill and use us. Personally I am thanking the Lord for these messages and am asking Him that as they are humbling me and driving me to my knees, I may find more of His fullness. May God lead you on, for this is the searching which His people everywhere need just now” (Brother in California). “I receive the Studies regularly and appreciate them very much. Some of the articles stir me up, such as those on Repentance, Saving Faith, Assurance, Hebrews 10:26, etc. They make one examine himself. I value your strong words, for we need to be stirred up” (Brother in Australia).

“Once again I would like to thank you for the Studies. I read and re-read them, and find much food for meditation and prayer. I can never read much before I have to pray. I have found the Lord very patient with me and after much examination I am daring to hope I have a little saving faith” (Sister in Australia). “Am writing to tell you that Mrs. — is wonderfully helped by the Studies. She told me that sometimes while she is reading them, she will have to stop and get down on her knees and talk with the Lord, and Miss — says the same” (Sister in New York). “I have never before read the book of Hebrews as I am now understanding it, nor have I ever before spent so much time with my Lord in the holy of holies” (Sister in California).

“What a precious article was that on ‘The Impeccability of Christ’! Not only do I find much soul-strengthening and establishment personally in reading your Studies, but after faith’s mastication, feel impelled to proclaim it to all whom the gracious Lord directs” (Preacher in England). “How I have appreciated the Studies you have given on Saving Faith. How firmly do I believe in what you have written. Maybe people think I am making it too hard to be saved, but I think the trouble is with the people. They just cannot see they must leave the world when they accept Christ. Yes, they want Jesus Christ as Saviour, but not as their Lord, but there is no other way than the Lord’s way” (Preacher in Minn.).

“With profound gratitude to God, and His servant the editor, I have read the discussion of Assurance. Most frankly do I say that it is the only satisfying study of it that I have ever read, and I have read everything I could get my hands on in the years ago. Very truly do you say, ‘We have no access to the Lamb’s book of life,’ and therefore cannot tell by that whether or not our names are written there and whether the blessed promises of eternal live apply to us. And that, therefore, we must make our ‘calling and election sure’ by a self-examination as to whether or not we are in the faith to which the promises belong, and furthermore, that we are to determine whether or not we are in *the faith* by the fruit it bears in our hearts and lives. The whole trouble on that point in this country has grown out of an over-emphasis upon ‘justification *by faith alone*,’ without a clear definition of the faith which was meant—that such faith is the gift of God, and comes alone to the ‘broken and contrite heart’ in a state of repentance—by which emphasis they have eliminated genuine repentance from the thinking of the people. How much harm has been and will yet be done by this ad-mixture of Fatalism and Arminianism only the Lord can know” (An aged Preacher in the U.S.A.).

“Your expositions are of great help to me. I perfectly agree with you as to the lop-sidedness of present-day teaching in many of even the ‘awakened’ circles. Today the great question of man’s responsibility is scarcely touched upon. The current conception of the grace of God, eliminating almost every spiritual liability of His creatures, is altogether unwarranted in Holy Writ” (Missionary in France). How it rejoices our heart to receive such confirmatory testimonies and to see God is opening the eyes of others to discern that while His salvation *is* by grace alone, it is *not* at the expense of the unchanging requirements of His righteousness and that we must not separate the work of the Spirit from the work of Christ.

“We are surely living in a day of spiritual famine—so many books and yet so few that amount to much spirituality. Conditions are appalling. The more I go into Studies, the more I see the value of the practical side of the Christian life” (Brother in California). “I want to thank you for your kindness in sending the Studies. More than ever I look forward to them and am eagerly waiting for them by the time the two months come round. Every other book or magazine now seems empty, for the Studies are so full of spiritual food. I am greatly interested in ‘The Life of David’ series. I often think of the hours you spend indoors searching God’s precious Word, seeking food for His hungry people, while others are out enjoying the fresh air. I remember too, dear Mrs. Pink, and the hours she spends in addressing envelopes, etc.” (Sister in England). We lived in her town for some months. Brother Preachers—the eyes of people are upon us! watching, whether we toil or loaf!

“Before I began reading Studies, I was continually praying for deeper knowledge and a closer walk with Him who is able to keep us from falling and thus lift us over the snags and pitfalls of life. I do praise His holy name tonight that He ever made it possible for us all to receive the light from His Word which we have through the help of the Studies. Certainly I am grateful to you for sending them to me. I sure wish I was in a position financially to help out a little. I received a great deal of help in reading the articles on Assurance, especially the Dialogues. May the Lord open the way for more such” (Brother in Mich.). “You will never know how much Studies have meant to us, as we never hear any ministry like them. The ministers here in the churches exalt man in place of Christ, and that is not what a hungry Christian needs. We want more and more of the blessed Saviour” (Sister in Nebraska).

“God bless you and your work in the future as He has in the past, is my prayer. I praise God for the Studies. They are wonderful soul-food and they do me O so much good. I arise about two hours before the rest of the household does, so I can read and study with a clear mind in the

presence of my Lord and Saviour, and then I am in shape to go on with my daily duties. I would that we had more men of God like you” (Brother in Oregon). And we would that more of God’s people did as this hard-working man does and put first things first, thinking of the soul before the body. “The soul of the sluggard *desireth*, and hath nothing” (Pro 13:4). It is not enough to “desire,” there must be determination and diligence. Truth has to be “bought” (Pro 23:23). It is the *diligent* soul which God promises to make “fat” (Pro 13:4).

“For some months now I have been receiving Studies and I am taking this opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks and appreciation to God for having brought them into my hands. This is the teaching I have long been hungering for” (Brother in Australia). The Lord is preparing many hearts for His humbling messages. “I have received a great deal of help and blessing from the Studies. They have cheered me up in many a lonely hour and given me a deeper appreciation of the things of God, and a greater desire to be here as a witness for our blessed Lord and Saviour” (Sister in Australia). “I cannot express what I feel in sending these lines to let you know how very much I appreciate your Studies. They do indeed supply a great lack in the teaching of today. The ‘Obedience of Christ’ and ‘Wrongs Righted’ have been a blessing to my soul” (Sister in England). “I am getting great profit from the Studies and will be very thankful for sending them to me for 1933” (Brother in Canada).

“I am sending this letter of deep appreciation for the papers you have so kindly sent me. They have been of help to me in the study of the Holy Scriptures. The only thing that burdens me is that I am not able to assist this work financially” (Brother in Wales). “For many days now I have read your magazine with real spiritual profit. When I read your Gleanings in Genesis and in Exodus, I must candidly say they had a definite formative influence on my personal life, and I am finding increasing joy in the addresses on Hebrews” (Brother in Scotland). “I am writing to thank you gratefully for the many copies of Studies you have so kindly sent me, and for which I would love to enclose a gold check as a token of my deep appreciation for the great blessing they have been to me, but I am very sorry I cannot do so” (Missionary in Japan).

“Continue to go forth with weeping, sowing precious seed in the field of human hearts. You shall doubtless come before the Lord rejoicing, bringing sheaves with you. I cannot express my feelings in English. Your writings reveal the power of the Holy Spirit. Glory to Him from whom all blessings flow. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. By His grace I am what I am” (An Ukrainian Brother). “I thank my God for your testimony in the truth, as I see it on the pages of Studies” (A Russian Brother). “I have regularly received your blessed paper. Thank God and thank you. I believe it is His grace which enables you to publish Studies under these circumstances and conditions” (A Syrian Brother). “Studies have been a continued source of help, illumination, and exhortation to me. May the Lord richly bless you and your work during the year” (Missionary in El Salvador).

“I have felt for a long time how I should like to tell you what a help the Studies have been to me. I have read and re-read the articles on Assurance with great profit, although many things were not quite plain, but in the ‘Humble Heart’ (February) I feel you have spoken to me face to face and I am overjoyed to tell you the Holy Spirit has made everything plain to me through your words written therein. The desire of my heart is that day by day I may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (Sister in England).

“I enjoyed every article in the January issue of Studies, each one being a real feast to my soul. But that on ‘Dispensationalism’ is the one I desire to comment on, I cried when I read it, but the tears were tears of joy, and I laid the paper down and offered to *HIM* sacrifices of praise, giving thanks to His name for all those whom our blessed Lord has so graciously endowed with such an



understanding of His Holy Word” (A Sister in Texas). This dear sister has had to take her stand against ultra-dispensationalism and (to quote her again) in consequence, “I had to suffer the loss of my family, because it necessitated my moving from home. But the Lord be praised, for He alone is worthy, and I know His presence went with me and is still with me, and I can say with David ‘He is my Portion’.”

May the above quotations evoke praise from many hearts. In closing, we would say once more—particularly for the benefit of our new readers—this article is *not* to be construed as an indirect appeal for funds. Thank God there is no shortage with us—gifts continue to come in freely and if they did not, we trust we should be kept from the awful sin of leaning upon the arm of flesh. There are few things we loathe more than to see those professing to be engaged in a work of *faith* soliciting money, though we have more respect for them than for those who attempt to disguise their unbelief by *making known their needs to man*, and at the same time requesting the “prayers” of their friends. Let the servant of God—and the Christian too—spread his case before the Lord, heeding that word, “My soul, wait thou *only* upon God” (Psa 62:5). We sincerely trust that many of these bogus “faith” enterprises, which have for so long preyed upon a credulous public, will soon go out of business—the world will be no worse off, and God will be less dishonoured.

# September

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 9. The Advent of the Spirit

It is highly important we should closely observe how that each of the Eternal Three has been at marked pains to provide for the honour of the other divine Persons, and as particular must we be to give it to Them accordingly. How careful was the Father to duly guard the ineffable glory of the Darling of His bosom when He laid aside the visible insignia of His deity and took upon Him the form of a servant. His voice was then heard more than once proclaiming, “This is my beloved Son.” How constantly did the incarnate Son divert attention from Himself and direct it to the One who had sent Him. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is not here to glorify Himself, but rather Him whose Vicar and Advocate He is (Joh 16:14). Blessed is it then to mark how jealous both the Father and the Son have been to safeguard the glory and provide for the honour of the Holy Spirit.

“If I go not away, the Comforter will not come (Joh 16:7). He will not do these works while I am here and I have committed all to Him. As My Father hath visibly ‘committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father’ (Joh 5:22-23), so I and My Father will send Him, having committed all these things to Him, that all men might honor the Holy Spirit, even as they honour the Father and the Son. Thus wary and careful are every one of the Persons to provide for the honour of each other in our hearts” (Thomas Goodwin, 1670 [1600-1680]).

The public advent of the Spirit, for the purpose of ushering in and administering the new covenant, was second in importance only unto the incarnation of our Lord, which was in order to the winding up of the old economy and laying the foundations of the new. When God designed the salvation of His elect, He appointed two great means—the gift of His Son for them and the gift of His Spirit to them, thereby each of the Persons in the Trinity being glorified. Hence, from the first entrance of sin, there were two great heads to the promises which God gave His people—the sending of His Son to obey and die, the sending of His Spirit to make effectual the fruits of the former. Each of these divine gifts was bestowed in a manner suited both to the august Giver Himself and the eminent nature of the gifts. Many and marked are the parallels of correspondence between the advent of Christ and the advent of the Spirit.

1. God appointed that there should be a signal coming accorded unto the descent of each from heaven to earth for the performance of the work assigned them. Just as the Son was present with

the redeemed Israelites long before His incarnation (Act 7:37-38; 1Co 10:4), yet God decreed for Him a visible and more formal advent, which all of His people knew of. So though the Holy Spirit was given to work regeneration in men all through the Old Testament era (Neh 9:20, etc.), and moved the prophets to deliver their messages (2Pe 1:21), nevertheless, God ordained that He should have a coming in state, in a solemn manner, accompanied by visible tokens and glorious effects.

2. Both the advents of Christ and of the Spirit were the subjects of Old Testament prediction. During the past century, much has been written upon the Messianic prophecies, but the promises which God gave concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit constitute a theme which is generally neglected. The following are among the principal pledges which God made that the Spirit should be given unto and poured out upon His saints—Psalm 68:18; Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 36:26, 39:29; Joel 2:28; Haggai 2:9. In them the descent of the Holy Spirit was as definitely announced as was the incarnation of the Saviour in Isaiah 7:14.

3. Just as Christ had John the Baptist to announce His incarnation and to prepare His way, so the Holy Spirit had Christ Himself to foretell His coming and to make ready the hearts of His own for His advent.

4. Just as it was not until “the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal 4:4), so it was not until “the day of Pentecost was fully come” that God sent forth His Spirit (Act 2:1).

5. As the Son became incarnate in the holy land, Palestine, so the Spirit descended in Jerusalem.

6. Just as the coming of the Son of God into this world was auspiciously signalized by mighty wonders and signs, so the descent of God the Spirit was attended and attested by stirring displays of divine power. The advent of each was marked by supernatural phenomena—the angel choir (Luk 2:13) found its counterpart in the “sound from heaven” (Act 2:2), and the Shekinah “glory” (Luk 2:9) in the “tongues like as of fire” (Act 2:3).

7. As an extraordinary star marked the “house” where the Christ-child was (Mat 2:9), so a divine shaking marked the “house” to which the Spirit had come (Act 2:2).

8. In connection with the advent of Christ there was both a private and a public aspect to it. In like manner too was it in the giving of the Spirit. The birth of the Saviour was made known unto a few, but when He was to “be made manifest to Israel” (Joh 1:31), He was publicly identified, for at His baptism the heavens were opened, the Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father audibly owned Him as His Son. Correspondingly, the Spirit was communicated to the apostles privately, when the risen Saviour “breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (Joh 20:22), and later He came publicly on the day of Pentecost, when all the great throng then in Jerusalem were made aware of His descent (Act 2:32-36).

9. The advent of the Son was in order to His becoming incarnate, when the eternal Word was made flesh (Joh 1:14), so too the advent of the Spirit was in order to His becoming incarnate in Christ’s redeemed, as the Saviour had declared to them, the Spirit of truth “shall be *in* you” (Joh 14:17). This is a truly marvelous parallel. As the Son of God became man, dwelling in a *human* “temple” (Joh 2:19), so the third Person of the Trinity took up His abode *in men*, to whom it is said, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1Co 3:16). As the Lord Jesus said to the Father, “A body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5), so the Spirit could say to Christ, A body has thou prepared me (see Eph 2:22).

10. When Christ was born into this world, we are told that Herod “was *troubled*, and all Jerusalem with him” (Mat 2:3). In like manner, when the Holy Spirit was given, we read, “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were *confounded*” (Act 2:5-6).

11. It had been predicted that when Christ should appear He would be unrecognized and unappreciated (Isa 53), and so it came to pass. In like manner, the Lord Jesus declared, “The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him” (Joh 14:17).

12. As the Messianic claims of Christ were called into question, so the advent of the Spirit was at once challenged, “They were all amazed, and *were in doubt*, saying one to another, What meaneth this?” (Act 2:12).

13. The analogy is yet closer. As Christ was termed “a winebibber” (Mat 11:19), so of those filled with the Spirit it was said, “These men are full of new wine” (Act 2:13)!

14. As the public advent of Christ was heralded by John the Baptist (Joh 1:29), so the meaning of the public descent of the Spirit was interpreted by Peter (Act 2:15-36).

15. God appointed unto Christ the executing of a stupendous work, even that of purchasing the redemption of His people. Even so the Spirit has been assigned the momentous task of effectually applying to His elect the virtues and benefits of the atonement.

16. As in the discharge of His work the Son honoured the Father (Joh 14:10), so in the fulfillment of His mission the Spirit glorifies the Son (Joh 16:13-14).

17. As the Father paid holy deference unto the Son by bidding the disciples “Hear ye him” (Mat 17:5), in like manner the Son shows respect for His Paraclete by saying, “He that hath an ear, let him *hear what the Spirit saith* unto the churches” (Rev 2:7).

18. As Christ committed His saints into the safe-keeping of the Holy Spirit (Joh 16:7; 14:16), so the Spirit will yet deliver up those saints unto Christ, as the word “receive” in John 14:3 plainly implies. We trust that the reader will find the same spiritual delight in perusing this article, as the writer had in preparing it.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 69. The Faith of Joseph (11:22)

At the early age of seventeen, Joseph was carried away into a foreign country, into a heathen land. There he remained for many years surrounded by idolators and during all that time he, probably, never came into contact with a single child of God. Moreover, in those days there was no Bible to read, for none of God’s Word had then been committed to writing. Yet amid all sorts of temptations and trials, he remained true unto the Lord. Thirteen years in prison did not embitter him, being made lord over Egypt did not spoil him, evil examples all around did not corrupt him. O the mighty power of divine grace to *preserve* its favoured objects. But let the reader carefully

bear in mind that, in his earliest years, Joseph had received a godly training! O how this ought to encourage Christian parents—do your part in faithfully teaching the children, and with God’s blessing, it will abide with them, even though they move into a foreign land.

It may strike some of our readers that the apostle made a strange selection here from the remarkable history of Joseph. No reference is given unto his faithfulness to God in declaring what He had made known to him (Gen 37:5), his chastity (Gen 39:10), his patience under affliction (Psa 105:18-19), his wisdom and prudence (Gen 39:22; 47:14), his fear of God (Gen 42:18), his compassion (Gen 42:24), his overcoming evil with good (Gen 45:10), his reverence to his father, and that when he was advanced unto outward dignity above him (Gen 48:12), his obedience to his father (Gen 47:31). Instead, the whole of his memorable life is passed over and we are introduced to the final scene. But this seeming difficulty is at once removed if we bear in mind the Spirit’s scope in this chapter, namely, to encourage the fearful and wavering Hebrews, by bringing before them striking examples of the efficacy and sufficiency of faith to carry its favoured possessor safely through every difficulty and ultimately conduct him into the promised inheritance.

Not only was there a particular reason in the case of those who first received this epistle, why the Holy Spirit should conduct them unto the expiring moments of Joseph, but there is also a wider purpose why (in this description of the whole life of faith) He should do so. Faith is a grace which honours God and stands its possessor in good stead, in death as well as in life. The worldling may appear to prosper and his journey through life seem to be smooth and easy, but how does he fare in the supreme crisis? What support is there for his heart when God calls him to pass out of time into eternity? “For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?” (Job 27:8). Ignorance may exclude terror and sottishness may still the conscience, but there can be no true peace, no firm confidence, no triumphant joy for those out of Christ. Only he can die worshipping and glorifying God for His promises who possesses genuine faith.

If the kind providence of God preserves his faculties unto the end, a Christian ought not to be passive in death and die like a beast. No, this is the last time he can do anything for God on earth and therefore he should take a fresh and firm hold of His everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, (2Sa 23:5) going over in his mind the amazing grace of the Triune God toward him; the Father, in having from the beginning, chosen him unto salvation; the Son for having obeyed, suffered, and died in his room and stead; the Holy Spirit for having sought him out when dead in sins, quickened him into newness of life, shed abroad the love of God in his heart, and put a new song in his mouth. He should review the faithfulness and goodness of God toward him all through his pilgrimage. He should rest on the promises and view the glorious future awaiting him. Thereby, praise and thanksgiving will fill his soul and mouth, and God will be greatly honoured before the onlookers.

When faith is active during the dying hours of a saint, not only is his own heart spiritually upheld and comforted, but God is honoured and others are confirmed. A carnal man cannot speak well of the world when he comes to pass through the dark valley. No, he dares not commend his worldly life to others. But a godly man can speak well of God and commend His covenant to others. So it was with Jacob (Gen 48:15-16). So it was with Joshua, “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof” (Jos 23:14).

So was it also with Joseph. He could have left to his sons nobility of blood, a rich patrimony in Egypt, but he brought them to his father to receive *his* blessing (Gen 48:12). And what was

that? To invest them with the right of entering into the visible privileges of the covenant. Ah, to Joseph, the riches of Egypt were nothing in comparison with the blessings of Zion. And so again now, when his hours on earth were numbered, Joseph thinks not of the temporal position of honour which he had occupied so long, but was engaged only with the things of God and the promised inheritance. See here the power of a godly example. Joseph had witnessed the last acts of his father and now he follows in his steps. The good examples of superiors and seniors are of great force unto those who look up to them—how careful they should be, then, of their conduct! Let us seek to emulate that which is praiseworthy in our betters—Philippians 3:17; Hebrews 13:7.

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones” (Heb 11:22). First, let us observe *the time* when Joseph’s faith was here exercised. It was during his closing hours upon earth. Most of his long life had been spent in Egypt, and during its later stages, had been elevated unto a dizzy height. For as Acts 7:10 tells us, he was made “governor” or lord over Egypt, and over all Pharaoh’s house. But neither the honours nor the luxuries which Joseph received while in the land of exile made that holy man forget the promises of God, nor bound his soul to the earth. His mind was engaged in higher things than the perishing baubles of this world. Learn then, my reader, it is only as our hearts ascend to heaven that we are able to look down with contempt upon that which this world prizes so much.

From the case of Joseph we may see that earthly honour and wealth do not *in themselves* injure. Where there is a gracious heart to manage them, they can be employed with advantage and used to God’s glory. Many examples may be cited in proof of this. God has ever had a few of His saints even in Caesar’s “household” (Phi 4:22). Material things are God’s gifts and so must be improved unto His praise. There is as much faith, yea more, in moderating the affections under a full estate, as there is in depending upon God for supplies when we have nothing. Nevertheless, to learn “*how* to abound” (Phi 4:12) is a hard lesson. To keep the mind stayed upon God and the heart from settling down here, calls for much exercise of soul. Therefore are we exhorted, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psa 62:10)—but be thankful for them, and seek to use them unto God’s honour.

No, the poor do not have such temptations to overcome as do the rich. The poor are driven to depend upon God. They have no other alternative save abject despair. But there is more choice to those who have plenty. *Their* great danger is to lose sight of the Giver and become immersed in His gifts. Not so with Joseph. To him Egypt was nothing in comparison with Canaan. Then let us seek grace to be of his spirit. True greatness of mind is to count the highest things of earth as nothing when weighed against the things of heaven. It is a great mercy when the affluence of temporal things do not take the heart off the promises of God nor weaken faith in them, but for this there has to be a constant crying unto Him to quicken our spiritual sensibilities, keep us in close communion with Himself, wean us from things below.

But neither the riches nor the honours of Egypt could secure Joseph from death, nor did they make him unmindful or afraid of it. The time had arrived when he saw that his end was at hand and he met it with a confident spirit. And thus it should be with us. But in order to do this we must be all our lifetime preparing for *that* hour. Reader, there can be no dissembling then. Allow me to ask, Is your soul truly yielded up to God? Do you hold this world with a light hand? Are God’s promises your daily food? Life is held by a very uncertain tenure. Unless the Lord returns first, death will be the last great enemy which you have to contend and you will need to have on all your armour. If you have not on the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation,

what will you do in the swellings of the Jordan, when Satan is often permitted to make his fiercest attack?

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel” (Heb 11:22). Let us consider next *the strength* of his faith. It will be noted by the careful reader that the margin gives an alternative rendering, namely, “By faith Joseph, when he died, *remembered* the departing of the children of Israel.” The Greek will allow of either translation and personally we believe that the *fullness* of the Spirit’s words requires that both meanings be kept before us. That which is in view here is very striking and blessed. The word “remembered” shows that Joseph’s mind was now engaged with the promise which the Lord had made to Abraham, recorded in Genesis 15:14-16. The alternative translation he “*made mention of* the departing of the children of Israel,” signifies that Joseph testifies his own faith and hope in the sure words of the living God.

At the end of Joseph’s long and memorable career, his thoughts were occupied not so much with what God had wrought for him, but with what He had promised unto His people. In other words, he was dwelling not upon the past, but with that which was yet future. In his heart were the “things hoped for” (Heb 11:1)! More than two hundred years had passed since Jehovah had spoken what is recorded in Genesis 15. Part of the prediction which He there made had been fulfilled, but to carnal reason there seemed very little prospect that the remainder of it would come to pass. First, God had announced that the seed of Abraham should be “a stranger in a land that is not theirs” (Gen 15:13), which had been confirmed when Jacob carried all his household down into Egypt. Second, God had declared the descendants of Abraham should “serve” the Egyptians and “they shall afflict them four hundred years” (Gen 15:13), but to outward sight, that now appeared most unlikely. The posterity of the patriarchs had been given favour in Pharaoh’s eyes (Gen 45:16-18), the “best” of the land was set apart for their use (Gen 47:6), there they multiplied exceedingly (Gen 47:27), and so great was the respect of the Egyptians that they “mourned” for Jacob seventy days (Gen 50:3). Joseph himself was their great benefactor and deliverer from the famine. Why, then, should his descendants be hated and oppressed by them? Ah, faith does not reason, but believes.

Third, God had declared that He would judge the Egyptians for their afflicting of His people (Gen 15:14), which was fulfilled in the awful plagues recorded in the early chapters of Exodus. Finally, God had promised “and afterward shall they come out with great substance...in the fourth generation they shall come [into Canaan] hither again” (Gen 15:14, 16). It was unto this that the heart of Joseph was now looking forward and nothing but *real* spiritual faith could have counted upon the same. If, after his death, the Hebrews (without a leader) were to be sorely afflicted and that for a *lengthy* season, if they were to be reduced unto helpless slaves, who could reasonably hope that all this should be followed by their leaving the land of Egypt with “great substance,” and returning to the land of Canaan? Ah, FAITH is fully assured that God’s promises *will be* fulfilled, no matter how long they may be delayed.

Faith is gifted with long-distant sight and therefore is it able to look beyond all the hills and mountains of difficulty unto the shining horizon of the divine promises. Consequently, faith is blessed with patience and calmly awaits the destined hour for God to intervene and act. Therefore does it heed that word, “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come,” (Hab 2:3). Though the Hebrews were to lie under Egyptian bondage for a long season, Joseph had not a doubt but that the Lord would, in His appointed time, bring them forth with a high hand. God’s *delays*, dear reader, are not to deny our prayers and mock our hopes, but are for the disciplining of our

hearts—to subdue our impatience, which wants things in our *own* way and time, to quicken us to call more earnestly upon Him, and to fit us for receiving His mercies when they are given.

God often defers His help until the very last moment. It was so with Abraham offering up Isaac. Only when his son had been bound to the altar and he had taken the knife into his hand to slay him, did God intervene. It was so with Israel at the Red Sea (Exo 14:13). It was so with the disciples in the storm, “the ship was covered with the waves,” before Christ calmed the sea (Mat 8:24-26). It was so with Peter in prison. Only a very few hours before his execution did God free him (Act 12:6-8). So, too, God works in mysterious ways *His* wonders to perform and often in a manner quite contrary to outward likelihood. The history of Joseph affords a striking example. He was first made a slave in Egypt and this in order to his being made ruler over it—who would have thought that the prison was the way to the court! So it was with his descendants. When their tale of bricks was doubled and the straw withheld, who would have looked for deliverance! Yes, *God’s* ways are strange to flesh and blood. Often He allows error to arise to clear the truth. Bondage often makes way for liberty, persecution and affliction have often proved blessings in disguise.

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” (Gen 50:24). How plainly and how blessedly does this bring out the *strength* of Joseph’s faith! There was no hesitancy or doubt. He was fully assured that God cannot lie and that He would, “*surely*” make good His word. Equally certain is it that God’s promises unto us will be fulfilled, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). Therefore may the dying saint exclaim, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psa 23:4). So too our faith may look beyond the grave unto the glorious resurrection, and say with David, “My flesh also shall rest *in hope*” (Psa 16:9).

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel” (Heb 11:22). Let us now take note of *the breadth* of his faith. A true Christian is known by his affection for Zion. The cause of Christ upon earth is *dearer* to him than the prosperity or disposition of his personal estate. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). Thus it was with Joseph. Before he gave commandment concerning his bones, he was first concerned with the future exodus of Israel and their settlement in Canaan! How different with the empty professor, who is ruled by self-love and has no heart for the people of God. He may be interested in the progress of *his own* denomination, but he has no concern for the Church at large. Far otherwise is it with the genuine saint, “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy” (Psa 137:5-6). So Joseph, at the very time of his death, was engaged with the future happiness of God’s people.

Beautiful indeed is it to see the dying Joseph unselfishly thinking about the welfare of others. O may God deliver the writer and reader from a narrow heart and a contracted spirit. True faith not only desires that it shall be well with our own soul, but with the Church at large. Behold another lovely example of this in the case of the dying daughter-in-law of Eli, the high priest, “And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken” (1Sa 4:22)—not my father-in-law is dead, not my husband has been slain, but “the glory is departed.” But most blessed of all is the case of Him of whom Joseph was here a type. As our precious Saviour drew near the cross, yea, on the very night of His betrayal, it is recorded that “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1). The interests of God’s people were ever upon His heart.



Let us note how another aspect of the *breadth* of true faith was illustrated by Joseph. Faith not only believes the promises which God has given to His saints individually, but also lays hold of those given to the Church collectively. There have been many seasons when the cause of Christ on earth has languished sorely, when it has been in a low state spiritually, when eminent leaders had been all called home, and when fierce persecution broke out against the little flock which they had left behind. Even so, they still had that sure word, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat 16:18). In all ages the enemy has sought to destroy the people of God, but the Lord has defeated his designs and rendered his opposition ineffectual. O for a faith to *now* lay hold of this promise, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isa 59:19).

“And gave commandment concerning his bones” (Heb 11:22). The reference here is to what is recorded in Genesis 50:25, “And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.” This brings out another characteristic of his faith—the *public avowal* of it. Joseph’s faith was no secret thing, hidden in his own heart, about which others knew nothing. No, though he had occupied for so long an eminent situation, he was not ashamed to now let others know that he found his support and confidence in the promises of God. He had been of great dignity and authority among the Egyptians, and his fame for wisdom and prudence was great among the nations. It was therefore the more necessary for him to *openly renounce* all alliance with them, lest posterity think he had become an Egyptian. Had he liked and loved the Egyptians, he had wanted his tomb among them, but his heart was elsewhere.

“And gave commandment concerning his bones” (Heb 11:22). This was not a superstitious request, as though it made any difference whether our bodies be deposited in “consecrated” ground or no. Rather it was, first, to exhibit his belief in the promises of Jehovah. Though he could not go in person into the land of Canaan, yet he would have his bones carried thither and thus symbolically (as it were) take possession of it. Second, to confirm the hope of his brethren and thus draw their hearts from the goodly portion in Goshen. He would sharpen the desire of the nation to earnestly aspire after the promised redemption when he was dead. Third, to establish a public memorial, by which, on all occasions, his posterity might call to mind the truth of the promise.

Proof that this dying request of Joseph’s was designed as a *public memorial* is found in noting a significant change between the wording of Genesis 50:24 and 50:25. In the former, Joseph “said unto his brethren,” in the latter, he “took an oath of the children of Israel” (cf. Exo 13:19). By the heads of their tribes, he brought the whole people into this engagement—binding on after generations. Thus Joseph established this monument of his being of the favoured seed of Abraham. Joseph’s requesting his brethren to “take an oath” illustrates the power of example, cf. Genesis 47:31! He made reference to his “bones” rather than to his “body,” because he knew another two centuries must yet run their course. The whole transaction was an emblematic pledge of *the communion of saints*. Though the Christian at death be cut off from his loved ones on earth, he is introduced unto the spirits of the just in heaven.

# THE LIFE OF DAVID

## 21. His Final Words with Saul

“There are few periods in the life of David in which his patient endurance was displayed more conspicuously than in his last interview with Saul. Saul had once more fallen into his power, but David again refused to avail himself of the advantage. He would not deliver himself by means that God did not sanction, nor stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed. Recognition of the excellency of David and confession of his own sin was extorted, even from the lips of Saul” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

In the preceding article, we followed David and his lone attendant as they entered the camp of Saul, and secured the king’s spear and the cruse of water which lay at his head. Having accomplished his purpose, David now retired from his sleeping enemies. Carrying with him clear evidence that he had been in their very midst, he determined to let them know what had transpired, for he was far from being ashamed of his conduct—when our actions are innocent, we care not who knows of them. David now stations himself within hailing distance, yet sufficiently removed that they could not come at him quickly or easily. “Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them” (1Sa 26:13). This was evidently on some high point facing the “hill of Hachilah” (1Sa 26:3), a wide valley lying between.

“And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner?” (1Sa 26:14). David now hailed the sleeping camp with a loud voice, addressing himself particularly unto Abner, who was the general of the army. Apparently he had to call more than once before Abner was fully aroused. “Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king?” (1Sa 26:14). Probably those were words both of anger and contempt—annoyance at being so rudely disturbed from his rest and scorn as he recognized the voice of the speaker. Abner had so lightly esteemed David and his men that he had not considered it necessary to keep awake personally, nor even to appoint sentinels to watch the camp. The force of his question was, Whom do you think *you* are, that you should address the monarch of Israel! Let not the servants of God deem it a strange thing that those occupying high offices in the world consider them quite beneath their notice.

“And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord” (1Sa 26:15). David was not to be brow-beaten. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro 28:1). Where the fear of God rules the heart, man cannot intimidate. Paul before Agrippa, Luther before the Diet of Worms, John Knox before bloody Queen Mary are cases in point. My reader, if you tremble before worms of the dust, it is because you do not tremble before God. David boldly charged Abner with his criminal neglect.

First, he reminded him that he was a valiant “man,” i.e., a man in office and therefore duty bound to guard the person of the king. Second, he bantered him in view of the high position he held. Third, he informed him of how the king’s life had been in danger that night as the result of his culpable carelessness. It was tantamount to telling him he was disgraced forever.

“This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD’S anointed” (1Sa 26:16). By martial law, Abner and his officers had forfeited their lives. It should be duly noted that David was not here speaking as a private person to Saul’s general, but as the servant and mouthpiece of God, as is evident from “as the LORD liveth.” “And now see where the king’s spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster” (1Sa 26:16). David continued to banter him. The force of this word was, Who is *really* the king’s friend—you who neglected him and left him exposed, or I that spared him when he was at my mercy! You are stirring up Saul against me and pursuing me as one who is unfit to live, but *who*, now, is worthy to die? It was plainly a case of the biter being bit.

“And Saul knew David’s voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David?” (1Sa 26:17). The king at once recognized the voice of him that was denouncing Abner and addressed him in terms of cordial friendship. See here another illustration of the instability and fickleness of poor fallen man. One day thirsting after David’s blood and the next day speaking to him in terms of affection! What reliance can be placed in such a creature? How it should make us the more revere and adore the One who declares, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal 3:6). “And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king” (1Sa 26:17). Very beautiful is this. Though David could not admire the variableness and treachery of Saul’s character, yet he respected his office and is here shown paying due deference to the throne. He not only owned Saul’s crown, but acknowledged that he was *his* sovereign. Tacitly, it was a plain denial that David was the rebellious insurrectionist Saul had supposed.

“And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?” (1Sa 26:18). Once more (cf. 1Sa 24:11, etc.) David calmly remonstrated with the king. What ground was there for his being engaged in such a bloodthirsty mission? First, David was not an enemy, but ready to act as his “servant” and further the court’s interests. Thus he suggested it was against Saul’s own good to persecute one who was ready to do his bidding and advance his kingdom. Equally unreasonable and foolish have been other rulers who hounded the servants of God. None are more loyal to the powers that be, none do as much to really strengthen their hands, as the true ministers of Christ and therefore, they who oppose them are but forsaking their own mercies.

Second, by pursuing David, Saul was driving him from his master and lawful business, and compelling to flee the one who wished to follow him with respect. O the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is not only unreasonable and unjust (and therefore denominated “iniquity”), but cruel, both in its nature and in its effects. Third, he asked, “What have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?” Questions which a clear conscience (and that only) is never afraid of asking. It was the height of wickedness for Saul to persecute him as a criminal, when he was unable to charge him with any crime. But let us observe how that by these honest questions David was a type of Him who challenged His enemies with “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (Joh 8:46), and again, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?” (Joh 18:23).

“Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let Him accept an offering” (1Sa 26:19). It is likely that David had paused and waited for Saul to make reply to his searching queries. Receiving no answer, he continued his address. David himself now suggested two possible explanations for the king’s

heartless course. First, it might be that the Lord Himself was using him thus to righteously chastise His servant for some fault. It was *the divine side* of things which first engaged David's mind, "If the LORD have stirred thee up against me." This is a likelihood which should always exercise the conscience of a saint, for the Lord "doth not afflict willingly" (Lam 3:33), but usually because *we* give Him occasion to use the rod upon us. Much of this would be spared if we kept shorter accounts with God and more unsparingly judged ourselves (1Co 11:31). It is always a timely thing to say with Job, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me" (Job 10:2). Should the Lord convict him of any offense, then, "Let him accept an offering" (1Sa 26:19). David would then make his peace with God and present the required sin offering. For the Christian, this means that, having humbled himself before God, patiently confessed his sins, he now pleads afresh the merits of Christ's blood, for the remission of their governmental consequences. But secondly, if God was not using Saul to chastise David (as indeed He was), then if evil men had incited Saul to use such violent measures, the divine vengeance would assuredly overtake them—they were accursed before God. It is blessed to note the mildness of David on this occasion. So far from reviling the king and attributing his wickedness unto the evil of his own heart, every possible excuse was made for his conduct.

"But if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods" (1Sa 26:19). This was what pained David the most—not the being deprived of an honourable position as servant to Saul, not the being driven from home, but being exiled from Canaan and cut off from the public means of grace. No longer could he worship in the tabernacle, but forced out into the deserts and mountains, he would soon be obliged to leave the Holy Land. By their actions, his enemies were saying in effect, "Go, serve other gods," driving him into a foreign country, where he would be surrounded by temptations. It is blessed to see that it was the having to live among *idolaters*, and not merely among *strangers*, which worried him the more.

Ah, nought but the sufficiency of divine grace working in David's heart could, under such circumstances, have kept him from becoming utterly disgusted with the religion which Saul, Abner, and his fellows professed. But for *that*, David had said, "If these be 'Israelites, then let me become and die a Philistine!" Yes, and probably more than one or two readers of this article have, like the writer, passed through a similar situation. We expect unkind, unjust, treacherous, merciless treatment at the hands of the world, but when they came from those whom we have regarded as true brethren and sisters in Christ, we were shaken to the very foundation, and but for the mighty power of the Spirit working within, would have said, "If *that* is Christianity, I will have no more to do with it!" But, blessed be His name, God's grace *is* sufficient.

"Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains" (1Sa 26:20). In these words David completed his address to Saul. First, he gave solemn warning that if he shed his blood, it would fall before the face of the Lord, and *He* would not hold him guiltless. Second, he argued that it was far beneath the dignity of the monarch of Israel to be chasing the son of Jesse, whom he here likens unto "a flea"—an insignificant and worthless thing. Third, he appeals again to the King's conscience by resembling his case to men hunting a "partridge"—an innocent and harmless bird which when attacked by men offers no resistance, but flies away, such had been David's attitude. Now we are to see what effect all this had upon the king.

"Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly" (1Sa 26:21). This is more than the wretched king had acknowledged on a

former occasion and yet it is greatly to be feared that he had no true sense of his wickedness or genuine repentance for it. Rather was it very similar to the remorseful cry of Judas, when he said, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Mat 27:4). These words of Saul’s were the bitter lament of one who, too late, realized he had made shipwreck of his life. He owned that he had “sinned”—broken God’s law—by so relentlessly persecuting David. He besought his son to return, assuring him that he would do him no more injury, but he must have realized that *his* promises could not be relied upon. He intimated that David’s magnanimity had thoroughly melted his heart, which shows that even the worst characters are capable of recognizing the good deeds of God’s people.

“Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly” (1Sa 26:21). O what a fool he had been—in opposing the man after God’s own heart, in alienating his own son, in so sorely troubling Israel, and in bringing madness and sorrow upon himself! And how exceedingly had he “erred”—by driving away from his court the one who would have been his best friend, by refusing to learn his lesson on the former occasion (1Sa 24), by vainly attempting to fight against the Most High! Unsaved reader, suffer us to point out that these words, “I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly” are the wail of the lost in hell. Now it is too late, they realize what fools they were in despising the day of their opportunity, in neglecting their souls’ eternal interests, in living and dying in sin. They realize they “erred exceedingly” in ignoring the claims of God, desecrating His holy Sabbaths, shunning His Word, and despising His Son. Will this yet be *your* cry?

“And David answered and said, Behold the king’s spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it” (1Sa 26:22). This at once shows the estimate which David placed on the words of the king. He did not dare to trust him and return the spear in person, still less accompany him home. Good impressions quickly pass from such characters. No good words or fair professions entitle those to our confidence who have long sinned against the light. Such people resemble those spoken of in James 1:23-24, who hear the Word and do it not, and are like unto a man “beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and *straightway forgetteth* what manner of man he was.” Thus it was with Saul. He now said that he had sinned, played the fool, and erred exceedingly, yet this deterred him not from seeking unto the witch of Endor!

“The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand today, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD’S anointed” (1Sa 26:23). This was very solemn, David now appealed to God to be the Judge of the controversy between himself and Saul, as One who was inflexibly just to render unto every man according to his works. David’s conscience is quite clear in the matter, so he need not hesitate to ask the Righteous One to decide the issue. Good for us is it when we too are able to do likewise. In its final analysis, this verse was really a prayer. David asked for divine protection on the ground of the mercy which he had shown to Saul.

“And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation” (1Sa 26:24). It is to be noted that David made no direct reply to what Saul had said, but his language shows plainly that he placed no reliance in the king’s promises. He does not say, “As thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in *thine* eyes,” but rather, “in the eyes of the LORD.” His confidence was in God alone and though further trials awaited him, he counted upon His power and goodness to bring him safely through them.

“Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail” (1Sa 26:25). Such were the final words of Saul unto David. Patient faith had so far prevailed as to extort a blessing even from its adversary. Saul owned there was a glorious future before David, for he who humbleth himself shall be exalted. There was a clear conviction in the king’s mind that David was favoured by God, yet that conviction in nowise checked him in his own downward course. Convictions which lead to no amendment only increase condemnation. “So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.” (1 Sa 26:25). Thus they parted, to meet no more in this world. Saul went forward to his awful doom. David waited God’s time to ascend the throne.

## HEART WORK

### Part Three

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1Sa 16:7). How prone we are to be occupied with that which is evanescent, rather than with the things that abide. How ready to gauge things by our senses, instead of by our rational powers. How easily we are deceived by that which is on the surface, forgetting that true beauty lies within. How slow we are to adopt God’s way of estimating. Instead of being attracted by comeliness of physical features, we should value moral qualities and spiritual graces. Instead of spending so much care, time, and money in the adorning of the body, we ought to devote our best attention unto the developing and directing of the faculties of our souls. Alas, the vast majority of our fellows live as though they had no souls and the average professing Christian gives very little serious thought unto the same.

Yes, the Lord “looketh on the heart.” He sees its thoughts and intents, knows its desires and designs, beholds its motives and motions, and deals with us accordingly. The Lord discerns what qualities are in our hearts—what holiness and righteousness, what wisdom and prudence, what justice and integrity, what mercy and kindness. When such graces are lively and flourishing, then is fulfilled that verse, “My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies” (Song 6:2). God esteems nothing so highly as holy faith, unfeigned love, and filial fear. In His sight, a “meek and quiet spirit” is of “great price” (1Pe 3:4). O to be careful in the cultivation of that which gives *Him* delight, then “keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23).

The sincerity of our profession largely depends upon the care and conscience we have in keeping our hearts. A very searching example of this is found in 2 Kings 10:31, “But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart.” Those words are the more solemn because of what is said of him in the previous verse, “And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel” (1Ki 10:30). Jehu was partial in his reformation, which

showed his heart was not right with God. He abhorred the worship of Baal which Ahab had fostered, but he tolerated the golden calves which Jeroboam had set up. He failed to put away all the evil.

Ah, my reader, true conversion is not only turning away from gross sin, it is the heart forsaking *all* sin. There must be no reserve, for God will not allow any idol, nor must we. Jehu went so far, but he stopped short of the vital point. He put away evil, but he did not do that which was good. He heeded not the law of the Lord to walk in it “with all his *heart*.” It is greatly to be feared that those who are heedless are graceless, for where the principle of holiness is planted in the heart, it makes its possessor circumspect and desirous of pleasing God in all things—not from servile fear, but from grateful love—not by constraint, but freely—not occasionally, but constantly.

“My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26). “The heart is that which the great God requires and calls for from every one of us. Whatever we give, if we do not give Him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon Him. Our thoughts must converse much with Him. And on Him, as our highest end, the intents of our hearts must be fastened. We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord and we must be free and cheerful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world. He will have all or none, ‘Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with *all* thy heart’ (Deu 6:5). To this call we must readily answer, My Father, take my heart, such as it is, and make it such as it should be. Take possession of it and set up Thy throne in it” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23). Guard it jealously as the dwelling place of Him to whom you have given it. Guard it with the utmost vigilance, for not only is there the enemy without seeking entrance, but there is a traitor within desirous of dominion. The Hebrew for “with all diligence” literally rendered is, “above all.” Above all the concerns of thy outward life, for careful as we should be as to that, it is before the eyes of men, whereas the heart is the object of *God’s* holy gaze. Then “keep” or preserve it more sedulously than your reputation, your body, your estate, your money. With all earnestness and prayer, labour that no evil desire prevails or abides there, avoiding all that excites lust, feeds pride, or stirs up anger, crushing the first emotions of such evils as you would the brood of a scorpion.

Many people place great expectations in varied circumstances and conditions. One thinks he could serve God much better if he were more prospered temporally. Another, if he passed through the refining effects of poverty and affliction. One thinks his spirituality would be promoted if he could be more retired and solitary. Another, if only he could have more society and Christian fellowship. But my reader, the only way to serve God better is to be content with the place in which He has put you and therein *get a better heart!* We shall never enter into the advantages of any situation, nor overcome the disadvantages of any condition, until we fix and water the root of them in ourselves. It is out of *the heart* are the “issues of life” (Pro 4:23). and not from our surroundings. “Make the tree good, *and* his fruit good” (Mat 12:33). Get the heart right and you will soon be superior unto all “circumstances.”

“But how can I get my heart right? Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” Answer—you are creating your own difficulty by confounding “heart” with “nature.” They are quite distinct. It is important to recognize this, for many are confused thereon. There has been such an undue emphasis upon the “two natures in the Christian,” that often it has been lost sight of that the Christian is *a person* over and above his two natures. The Scriptures make the distinction clear enough. For example, God does not bid us keep our “nature,” but He does our “heart.” We do not believe with our “nature,” but we do with our “hearts” (Rom 10:10)! God

never tells us to “rend” our nature (Joe 2:13), “circumcise” our nature (Deu 10:16), “purify” our nature (Jam 4:8), but He does our “hearts”! The “heart” is the very center of my responsibility, and to deny that I am to improve and keep it, is to repudiate human accountability.

It is the devil who seeks to persuade people that they are not responsible for the state of their hearts and may no more change them than they can the stars in their courses. And the “flesh” within finds such a lie very agreeable to its case. But he who has been regenerated by the sovereign grace of God, cannot, with the Scriptures before him, give heed unto any such delusion. While he has to deplore how sadly neglected is the great task which God has set before him, while he has to bemoan his wretched failure in making his heart what it ought to be, nevertheless, he wants to do better and after his duty has been pressed upon him—as it now has upon the readers of these articles—he will daily seek grace to better discharge his duty, and instead of being totally discouraged by the difficulty and greatness of the work required, he will cry the more fervently to the Holy Spirit for His enablement.

The Christian who means business will labour to have a “willing” heart (Exo 35:5)—which acts spontaneously and gladly, not of necessity. A “perfect” heart (1Ch 29:9)—sincere, genuine, upright. A “tender” heart (2Ch 34:27)—yielding and pliable, the opposite of hard and stubborn. A “broken” heart (Psa 34:18)—sorrowing over all failure and sin. A “united” heart (Psa 86:11)—all the affections centered on God. An “enlarged” heart (Psa 119:32)—delighting in *every* part of Scripture and loving *all* God’s people. A “sound” heart (Pro 14:30)—right in doctrine and practice. A “merry” heart (Pro 15:15)—rejoicing in the Lord alway. A “pure” heart (Mat 5:8)—hating all evil. An “honest and good heart” (Luk 8:15)—free from guile and hypocrisy, willing to be searched through and through by the Word. A “single” heart (Eph 6:5)—desiring only God’s glory. A “true” heart (Heb 10:22)—genuine in all its dealings with God.

The duty of keeping the heart with the utmost diligence is binding upon the Christian at all times. There is no period or condition of life in which he may be excused from this work. Nevertheless, there are distinctive seasons, critical hours, which call for more than a common vigilance over the heart and it is a few of these which we would now contemplate, seeking help from above to point out some of the most effectual aids unto the right accomplishment of the task God has assigned us. General principles are always needful and beneficial, yet details have to be furnished if we are to know how to apply them in particular circumstances. It is this lack of definiteness which constitutes one of the most glaring defects in so much modern ministry. Mere generalizations and platitudes are substituted for specific instructions and God has good reason to complain today, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:6).

1. *In times of Prosperity.* When providence smiles upon us and bestows temporal gifts with a lavish hand, then has the Christian urgent reason to keep his heart with all diligence, for that is the time we are apt to grow careless, proud, earthly. Therefore was Israel cautioned of old, “And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; *then beware* lest thou forget the LORD” (Deu 6:10-12). But they heeded not that exhortation for “Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked” (Deu 32:14).

Many are the warnings furnished in Scripture. Of Uzziah, it is recorded, “When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction” (2Ch 26:16). Of the king of Tyre, God said, “Thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches” (Eze 28:5). Of Israel, we read, “And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and



oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. *Nevertheless* they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee” (Neh 9:25-26). And again, “Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols” (Hos 8:4); “according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images” (Hos 10:1). “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me” (Hos 13:6).

Sad indeed are the above passages, the more so because we have seen such a tragic repetition of them in our own days. O the earthly-mindedness which prevailed, the indulging of the flesh, the sinful extravagance, which were seen among professing Christians while “times were good”! How practical godliness waned, how the denying of self disappeared, how covetousness, pleasure and wantonness possessed the great majority of those calling themselves the people of God. Yet great as was their sin, far greater was that of most of the preachers, who instead of warning, admonishing, rebuking, and setting before their people an example of sobriety and thrift, criminally remained silent upon the crying sins of their hearers, and themselves encouraged the reckless spending of money and the indulgence of worldly lusts. How, then, is the Christian to keep his heart from these things in times of prosperity?

First, by seriously pondering the dangerous and ensnaring temptations which attend a prosperous condition, for very, very few of those that live in the prosperity and pleasures of this world escape eternal perdition. “It is easier (said Christ) for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mat 19:24). O what multitudes have been carried to hell in the cushioned chariots of earthly wealth and ease, while a comparative handful have been whipped to heaven by the rod of affliction. Remember too that many of the Lord’s own people have sadly deteriorated in seasons of worldly success. When Israel was in a low condition in the wilderness, then were they “holiness unto the LORD” (Jer 2:3), but when they fed in the fat pastures of Canaan they said, “We are lords; we will come no more unto thee” (Jer 2:31).

Second, diligently seek grace to heed that word, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psa 62:10). Those riches may be given to try thee, not only are they most uncertain things, often taking to themselves wings and flying swiftly away, but at best they cannot satisfy the soul and only perish with the using. Remember that God values no man a jot more for these things. He esteems us by inward graces and not outward possessions, “In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Act 10:35). Third, urge upon thy soul the consideration of that awful Day of Reckoning, wherein, according to our receipt of mercies, so shall be our accountings of them, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luk 12:48). Each of us must yet give an account of our stewardship. Of every dollar we have spent, of every hour wasted, of every idle word uttered!

2. *In times of Adversity.* When providence frowns upon us, overturning our cherished plans and blasting our outward comforts, then has the Christian urgent need to look to his heart and keep it with all diligence from replying against God or fainting under His hand. Job was a mirror of patience, yet his heart was discomposed by trouble. Jonah was a man of God, yet he was peevish under trial. When the food supplies gave out in the wilderness, they who had been miraculously delivered from Egypt and who sang Jehovah’s praises so heartily at the Red Sea, murmured and rebelled. It takes much grace to keep the heart calm amid the storms of life, to keep the spirit sweet when there is much to embitter the flesh, and to say “The LORD gave, and

the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). Yet this is a Christian duty! To help thereunto.

First, consider, fellow-Christian, that despite these cross providences, God is still faithfully carrying out the great design of electing love upon the souls of His people and orders these very afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Nothing happens by chance, but all by divine counsel (Eph 1:11) and therefore it is 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). Ah, beloved, it will wonderfully calm thy troubled breast and sustain thy fainting heart to rest upon that blessed fact. The poor worldling may say, “The bottom has dropped out of everything,” but not so the saint, for the eternal God is *his* refuge and underneath him are still the “everlasting arms.” Then, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (Joh 14:27). The very afflictions which are so painful unto flesh and blood are designed for our spiritual blessing. God chastens for “our *profit*” (Heb 12:10).

It is ignorance or forgetfulness of God’s loving designs which makes us so prone to chafe under His providential dealings. If faith were more in exercise we should, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” or “trials” (Jam 1:2). Why so? Because we should discern those very trials were sent to wean our hearts from this empty world, to tear down pride and carnal security, to refine us. If, then, my Father has a design of love unto my soul, do I well to be angry with Him? If not now, later, you will see those bitter disappointments were blessings in disguise and will exclaim, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted” (Psa 119:71).

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 4. The Israel of God

We have now reached an aspect of our subject which the greatest confusion prevails today in many quarters. So one-sided is the teaching which has been given out about the “Jews” and “Israel,” so dogmatic have been the assertions made by “dispensationalists,” and so firmly have many grasped them as the very truth of God, that the minds of thousands are strongly prejudiced against anything which challenges the “new light” which it is claimed God gave unto certain men two or three generations ago, the use of which “light” has made the Bible “a new book” unto those who have received this novel method of interpreting and applying the sacred Scriptures. When we say “novel,” we mean that which differs radically from the principles of exegesis employed by the servants of God in all previous ages. While it is a fact that all the truth was not recovered at the Reformation and that the godly Puritan teachers are not to be regarded as infallible, yet prudence requires us to make doubly sure of our ground, ere we take up a position which opposes much of the teaching of God’s servants during that most highly favored period.

God has plainly bidden us, “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1Jo 4:1). “Try” them by His unerring Word. Nor is this something which can be accomplished in a few moments, not even by those well versed in Holy Writ, still less by those

having only a mere smattering of its contents. No, we need to emulate the Bereans, who “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Act 17:11). Nor is this all that is required, it is written, “The *meek* will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa 25:9). There must be a willingness to unlearn, if we have unconsciously imbibed error, there must be the realization that none of us know anything yet as we ought to know (1Co 8:2), and therefore there must be an humbling of ourselves before God, an acknowledgment of our great ignorance, and a prayerful waiting upon Him for the guidance and help of His Spirit. Only thus shall we be enabled to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21).

While it be true that the Word of God is inexhaustible and that the Holy Spirit is constantly granting further openings up of its contents to the saints, so that fresh beams are ever shining forth from the Sun of truth, nevertheless, the Spirit never contradicts Himself. Though what He vouchsafes unto one may augment that which He gave unto other teachers of the Word, yet these varied revelations *never oppose* each other. In view of this fact, the children of God are supplied with a sure rule by which they may measure the teachings of all who claim to be the servants of Christ. There is an “Analogy of Faith” (see Greek of Rom. 12:6, last clause) to which all sound teaching must necessarily conform, and anything which conflicts with its basic principles, is at once proven to be erroneous. So too there are “the footsteps of the flock” (Song 1:8), the imprints of those who have gone before and thereby we may know that any guide today who seeks to direct us along another and contrary path will only lead us *away from* the highway of truth.

In his earlier years, the writer of these articles was considerably influenced by men who loudly insisted that in the Scriptures “Jew” meant “Jew” and not a Christian, that “Israel” meant “Israel” and not the Church. These more recent “dispensationalists” were only carrying out unto their logical conclusions the principles which regulated the earlier Plymouth Brethren in their “prophetic” writings. For instance, Mr. J. N. Darby (1800-1882) declares again and again in his “Synopsis” that, “We must ever bear in mind that Israel was an earthly people.” But in later years, made increasingly suspicious by the source from which these strange teachings emanated (for it is today our settled conviction that the Plymouth Brethren are radically unsound and unscriptural on many fundamental doctrines), we have prayerfully endeavoured to *test* these assertions and as we laid them in the balances of the sanctuary, we discovered that they were “found wanting.” We do not ask the reader to accept *our* verdict, but to carefully weigh what follows and form a judgment of his own.

First of all let us examine this supposedly illuminating declaration that “Israel was an earthly people.” To say the least, it is a very silly and senseless statement. Of course they were an “earthly people,” for no one supposed they were a “lunar” people, inhabiting the moon, nor a “marine” people, living in the sea. The Egyptians, the Babylonians, and every other nation was equally an “earthly” people. Even the writer and all Christian readers are also an “earthly” people, for neither our bodies nor our souls have yet been removed to heaven! Probably it will be replied that which Mr. Darby and others meant was Israel’s *inheritance* was an “earthly” one. Very well, but even *that* statement is almost as unsatisfactory and misleading, unless it be explained and amplified. Was the inheritance of the patriarchs an “earthly” one? Hebrews 11:14-16 plainly shows otherwise. Was Moses’ inheritance an “earthly” one? Hebrews 11:26 clearly answers, No. Was David’s? If so how could he speak of himself as “a *stranger* in the earth” (Psa 39:12; 119:19)?

Second, we now charge the “dispensationalists” with gross carelessness in failing to distinguish between things that differ. The remarkable fact is that the very men who boast so loudly of their skill to “rightly divide the word of truth” have failed wretchedly to differentiate

between one who is a Jew outwardly and one who is a Jew inwardly, between the carnal Israel and the spiritual Israel. Some of the originators of the weird and erroneous scheme we are now rebutting, who were better read than their modern disciples, *were* acquainted with the distinction we have just named, (a distinction which was observed by all godly teachers from the days of the apostles until the early part of the nineteenth century), but apparently had an insatiable lust for originality and wishing to be looked up to as men who had taken a tremendous step forward in the understanding of God's Word, they disdained the "old paths" (Jer 6:16) and hewed out a new one for themselves and their credulous admirers.

In substantiation of the simple but important distinction named above, let us now direct the careful attention of the reader to the Scriptures. "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart" (Psa 73:1). Who are the ones referred to under the name "Israel" in this verse? The nation of Israel? all the fleshly descendants of David who were alive when Asaph penned that Psalm? Obviously no, for it most certainly could not be said of the far greater part of *them* that they had "clean hearts." See Psalm 12:1! A "clean heart" is not natural to men, either Jews or Gentiles, for by descent from Adam all are born into this world with hearts which are foul and desperately wicked. A "clean heart" is one which has been cleansed by the sanctifying operations of divine grace (Ti 3:5), through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on the conscience (Heb 10:22), and by a God-communicated faith (Act 15:9). Thus, the second clause of Psalm 73:1 *obliges* us to understand the "Israel" of the first clause as the *spiritual* Israel—God's chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people—and as obviously, excludes carnal Israelites.

Again, when the Lord Jesus exclaimed concerning Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (Joh 1:47), exactly what did He mean? Was nothing more signified than, "Behold a fleshly descendant of Jacob?" Assuredly it was not. Christ's language here was discriminating, as discriminating as when He said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples *indeed*" (Joh 8:31). When the Saviour said that they were "disciples indeed," He intimated they were such not only in name, but in fact—not only by profession, but in reality. And in like manner, when He affirmed that Nathanael was "an Israelite indeed," He meant that he was a genuine son of Israel, a man of faith and prayer, honest and upright. The added description "in whom is no guile" supplies still further confirmation that a saved and spiritual character is there in view. Compare "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psa 32:2).

"Behold Israel after the flesh" (1Co 10:18). Here again discriminating language is used. Why speak of "Israel after *the flesh*" unless it be for the express purpose of distinguishing them from Israel after the Spirit, that is, the regenerated and spiritual Israel? Israel "after the flesh" were the natural descendants of Abraham, but *spiritual* "Israel," whether from Jews or Gentiles, are those who are born again and who worship God in spirit and in truth. Surely it must now be plain to every unbiased reader that the term "Israel" is used in the Scriptures in more senses than one and that it is only by noting the qualifying terms which are added that we are able to identify *which* "Israel" is in view in any given passage. Equally clear should it now be that to talk of Israel being an "earthly people" is very loose and misleading language, and badly needs modifying and defining.

Nothing but confusion can prevail if we fail to observe that many words and phrases are employed in Holy Writ with varying significations. Yea, false doctrine will be taught by those who insist that each term used by the Holy Spirit has but one and uniform meaning. Many, many examples could be furnished in illustration of this. How many have erred through making the word "flesh" always refer to the physical body. What dishonouring views of the atonement have

been fostered by those who interpret “the world” of John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2 to mean the whole human race. What shallow views are encouraged by those who see no difference between the “repentance” of Judas (Mat 27:3) and that repentance which is “unto salvation” (2Co 7:10). How much of the terrible superficiality of modern “evangelism” is due to failure in distinguishing between the intellectual “believing” of John 12:42-43 and Acts 8:13, and the heart “believing” of Romans 10:10. In the same way, untold damage has been wrought by those ignoring (or denying) the scriptural distinction between carnal “Israel” and spiritual “Israel,” between the natural seed of Abraham and his mystical children.

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal 3:7). The “children of Abraham” are of *two kinds*, physical and spiritual, those who are his by nature and those who are connected with him by grace. “To be the children of a person, in a figurative sense, is equivalent ‘to resemble him and to be involved in his fate, good or bad.’ The idea is of similarity both in character and circumstances. To be ‘the children of God’ is to be like God, and also, as the apostle states it to be, ‘heirs of God.’ To be ‘the children of Abraham’ is to resemble Abraham, to imitate his conduct, and to share his blessedness” (Dr. John Brown, 1784-1858). To which we may add, to be “the children of the wicked” (Mat 13:38) is to be conformed to his vile image, both in character and conduct (Joh 8:44) and to share his dreadful portion (Mat 25:41).

The carnal Jews of Christ’s day boasted, “Abraham is our father,” to which He made answer “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (Joh 8:39). Ah, the *spiritual* children of Abraham “*walk in the steps of that faith*” which he had (Rom 4:12). Those who are his spiritual children are “*blessed with faithful Abraham*” (Gal 3:9). The apostle was there combating the error which the Judaizers were seeking to foist upon the Gentiles, namely, that none but Jews, or Gentiles proselyted by circumcision, were the “children of Abraham” and that none but those could be partakers of his blessing. But so far from that being the case, all unbelieving Jews shut heaven against themselves, while all who believed from the heart, being united to Christ—who is “*the Son of Abraham*” (Mat 1:1)—enter into all the blessings which God covenanted unto Abraham.

The *double* significance pertaining to the expression “children” or “seed” of Abraham was very plainly intimated at the beginning, when Jehovah said unto the patriarch, “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed *as the stars* of the heaven, and *as the sand* which is upon the sea shore” (Gen 22:17). What anointed eye can fail to see in the likening of Abraham’s seed unto the “stars of heaven” a reference to his *spiritual* children, who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb 3:1), and in the likening of his seed unto the “sand which is upon the seashore” a reference to his *natural* descendants, who occupied the land of Palestine! The same principle may be seen receiving exemplification again in the person of Abraham’s grandson, who was the immediate progenitor of the heads of the twelve tribes. He had a *dual* name, being first designated “Jacob,” which was his name according to nature, and then “Israel” (Gen 32:28) which was his name according to grace. How very striking to find that the *first* time the name “Israel” occurs in Scripture it was given to a man who now had a *double* name!

“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6). In this verse the apostle begins his discussion of the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and shows that God had predetermined to cast off the nation as such and extend the Gospel call to all men indiscriminately. He does this by showing God was free to act thus (vv. 6-24), that He had announced through His prophets He would do so (vv. 25-33). This was a particularly sore point with the Jew, who erroneously imagined that the promises

which God had made to Abraham and his seed included all his natural descendants, that those promises were sealed unto all such by the rite of circumcision, and that those inherited all the patriarchal blessings. Hence their claim, “*We have Abraham to our father*” (Mat 3:9). It was to refute this error, common among the Jews (and now revived by the “dispensationalists”), that the apostle here writes.

First, he affirms that God’s Word was not being nullified by his teaching (Rom 9:6, first clause), no indeed. His doctrine did not contravene the divine promises, for they had never been given to men in the flesh, but rather to men in the spirit—regenerate. Second, he insisted upon an important distinction (Rom 9:6, second clause), which we are now seeking to explain and press upon our readers. He points out there are *two* kinds of “Israelites”—those who are such only by carnal descent from Jacob and others who are so spiritually, these latter being alone the “children of the promise” (Rom 9:8)—cf. Galatians 4:23, where “born after the flesh” is opposed to born “by promise”! God’s promises were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, AS BELIEVERS, and they are the spiritual food and property of *none but believers*, Romans 4:13, 16. Until this fact be clearly grasped, we shall be all at sea in understanding scores of the Old Testament promises.

When the apostle here affirms that “They are not all *Israel*, which are *of Israel*” (Rom 9:6), he means that, not all the lineal descendants of Jacob belonged unto “the *Israel of God*” (Gal 6:16), those who were God’s people in the *highest* sense. So far from that being the case, many of the Jews were not God’s children at all (see John 8:42, 44), while many who were Gentiles by nature, have (by grace) been made “fellowcitizens with the [Old Testament] saints” (Eph 2:19) and “*blessed with faithful Abraham*” (Gal 3:9). Thus the apostle’s language in the second clause of Romans 9:6 has the force of—Not all who are members of the [ancient] visible church are members of the true church. The same thought is repeated in Romans 9:7, “Neither, because they are the [natural] seed of Abraham, are they all children”—that is the “children [or inheritors] of the promise,” as verse 7 explains—“but, in Isaac [the line of God’s election and sovereign grace] shall thy [true and spiritual] seed be called.” God’s promises were made unto the *spiritual* seed of Abraham and not to his natural descendants as such.

## THE RIGHT USE OF THE LAW

By John Newton

Dear Sir: You desire my thoughts on 1 Timothy 1:8, “We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully,” and I willingly comply. I do not mean to send you a sermon on the text, yet a little attention to method may not be improper upon this subject, though in a letter to a friend. Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes. This is the root of self-righteousness, the grand reason why the Gospel of Christ is no more regarded, and the cause of that uncertainty and inconsistency in many, who, though they profess themselves teachers, understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. If we previously state what is

meant by the law, and by what means we know the law to be good, I think it will, from these premises, be easy to conclude what it is to use the law lawfully.

The law, in many passages of the Old Testament, signifies the whole revelation of the will of God, as in Psalm 1:2. But the law, in a strict sense, is contradistinguished from the Gospel. Though the apostle considers it at large in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, I think it is evident that, in the passage you have proposed, the apostle is speaking of the law of Moses. But to have a clearer view of the subject, it may be proper to look back to a more early period.

The law of God, then, is, in its largest sense, that rule or prescribed course which He has appointed for His creatures, according to their several natures and capacities, that they may answer the end for which He has created them. Thus it comprehends the inanimate creation—the wind and storm fulfill His word or law. He hath appointed the moon for seasons and the sun knoweth his time for going down and going forth, and performs all his revolutions according to his Maker's pleasure. If we could suppose the sun was an intelligent being and should refuse to shine, or should wander from the station in which God has placed him, he would then be a transgressor of the law. But there is no such discord in the natural world. The law of God in this sense, or what many choose to call the law of nature, is no other than the impression of God's power, whereby all things continue and act according to His will from the beginning, for "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa 33:9).

The animals, destitute of reason, are likewise under a law, that is, God has given them instincts according to their several kinds, for their support and preservation, to which they invariably conform. A wisdom unspeakably superior to all the contrivances of man, disposes their concernments and is visible in the structure of a bird's nest, or the economy of a bee hive. But this wisdom is restrained within narrow lines. They act without any remote design and are incapable either of good or evil in a moral sense.

When God created man, He taught him more than the beasts of the earth and made him wiser than the fowls of heaven. He formed him for Himself, breathed into him a spirit, immortal and incapable of dissolution, gave him a capacity not to be satisfied with any creature-goodness, endowed him with an understanding, will, affections, which qualified him for the knowledge and service of his Maker, and a life of communion with Him. The law of God, therefore, concerning man, is that rule of disposition and conduct to which a creature so constituted ought to conform, so that the end of his creation might be answered and the wisdom of God be manifested in him and by him. Man's continuance in this regular and happy state was not necessary as it is in the creatures, who, having no rational powers, have properly no choice, but act under the immediate agency of divine power. As man was capable of continuing in the state in which he was created, so he was capable of forsaking it. He did so and sinned by eating the forbidden fruit. We are not to suppose that this prohibition was the whole of the law of Adam, so that if he had abstained from the tree of knowledge, he might in other respects have done (as we say) what he pleased. This injunction was the test of his obedience and while he regarded it, he could have no desire contrary to holiness, because his nature was holy. But when he broke through it, he broke through the whole law and stood guilty of idolatry, blasphemy, rebellion, and murder. The divine light in his soul was extinguished, the image of God defaced. He became like Satan, whom he had obeyed, and lost the power to keep that law which was connected with happiness. Yet, still the law remained in force. The blessed God could not lose His right to that reverence, love, and obedience, which must always be due to Him from His intelligent creatures. Thus Adam became a transgressor and incurred the penalty, death. But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His eternal purpose, revealed the promise of the Seed of the woman and instituted sacrifices as types

of that atonement for sin, which He, in the fullness of time, should accomplish by the sacrifice of Himself.

Adam, after his fall, was no longer a public person. He was saved by grace through faith [this, we believe, is a mistake—A.W.P.], but the depravity he had brought upon human nature remained. His children and so all his posterity were born in his sinful likeness, without either ability or inclination to keep the law [though still possessing the requisite faculties—A.W.P.]. The earth was soon filled with violence. But a few in every successive age were preserved by grace and faith in the promise. Abraham was favoured with a more full and distinct revelation of the covenant of grace. He saw the day of Christ and rejoiced. In the time of Moses, God was pleased to set apart a peculiar people to Himself and to them He published His law with great solemnity at Sinai. This law consisted of two distinct parts, very different in their scope and design, though both enjoined by the same authority.

The Decalogue, or ten commandments, uttered by the voice of God Himself is *an abstract of that original law* under which man was created, but published in a prohibitory form. The Israelites, like the rest of mankind, being depraved by sin and strongly inclined to the commission of every evil, this law could not be designed as a covenant, by obedience to which men should be judged, for long before its publication, the Gospel had been preached to Abraham (Gal 3:8). But the law entered that sin might abound, that the extent, the evil, and the desert of sin might be known, for it reaches to the most hidden thoughts of the heart, requires absolute and perfect obedience, and denounces a curse upon all who continue not therein.

To this was subsequently added the ceremonial or levitical law, prescribing a variety of institutions, purifications and sacrifices, the observance of which were, during that dispensation, absolutely necessary to the acceptable worship of God. By obedience to these prescriptions, the people of Israel preserved their legal right to the blessings pronounced to them as a nation and which were not confined to spiritual worshipers only, and there were likewise ordinances (means) and helps to the blessings promised them as a nation, and which were not confined to spiritual worshipers only. And there were likewise ordinances and helps to lead those who truly loved God, and had conscience of sin, to look forward by faith to the great sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who, in the fullness of time, was to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In both these respects the ceremonial law was abrogated by the death of Christ. The Jews then ceased to be God's peculiar people (nationally) and justice having expiated sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, by Christ's obedience unto death, all other sacrifices became unnecessary and vain. The Gospel supplies the place of the ceremonial law to the same advantage as the sun abundantly compensates for the twinkling stars and the feeble shining of the moonlight, which are concealed by its glory. Believers of old were relieved from the strictness of the moral law by the sacrifices which pointed to Christ. Believers under the Gospel are relieved by a direct application to the blood of the covenant. Both renounce any dependency upon the moral law for justification *and both accept it as a rule of life* in the hands of the Mediator, and are enabled to yield it a sincere, though not a perfect obedience.

If an Israelite, trusting in his observance to the moral law, had ventured to reject the ordinances of the ceremonial, he would have been cut off. In like manner, if any who are called Christians are so well satisfied with their moral duties that they see no necessity of making Christ their only hope, the law, by which they seek life, will be to them a ministration unto death. Christ and He alone, delivers us by faith in His name from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us.



The second inquiry is, How we come to know the law to be good? for by nature we do not, we cannot think so. We cannot be at enmity with God and at the same time approve of His law, rather this is the ground of our dislike to Him, that we conceive the law, by which we are to be judged, is too strict in its precepts and too severe in its threatenings, and therefore men, so far as in them lies, are for altering this law. They think it would be better if it required no more than we can perform, if it allowed us more liberty and especially if it was not armed against transgressors with the penalty of eternal punishment. This is evident from the usual pleas of awakened sinners. Some think, "I am not so bad as some others," by which they mean, God will surely make a difference and take favourable notice of what they suppose good in themselves. Others plead, "If I should not obtain mercy, what will become of the greater part of mankind!" by which they plainly intimate that it would be hard and unjust in God to punish such multitudes. Others endeavour to extenuate their sins, as Jonathan once said, "I did but taste a *little* honey, and I must die. These passions are natural to me, and must I die for indulging them?" In short, the spirit and strictness of the law, its severity and its leveling effects, confounding all seeming differences in human characters and stopping *every* mouth without distinction, are three properties of the law which the natural man cannot allow to be good.

These prejudices against the law can only be removed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is His office to enlighten and convince the conscience, to communicate an impression of the majesty, holiness, justice, and authority of the One with whom we have to do, whereby the evil and desert of sin are apprehended. The sinner is then stripped of all his vain pretenses, is compelled to plead guilty, and must justify his Judge even though he should condemn himself. It is His office likewise to discover the grace and glory of the Saviour, as having fulfilled the law for us and as engaged by promise to enable those who believe in Him to honour it with a due obedience in their own persons. Then a change of judgment takes place and the sinner consents to the law, that it is holy, just, and good. Then the law is acknowledged to be *holy*. It manifests the holiness of God and a conformity to it is the perfection of human nature.

There can be no excellence in man, but so far as he is influenced by God's law, without it, the greater his natural powers and abilities are, he is but so much the more dangerous and mischievous. It is assented to as *just*, springing from God's indubitable right and authority over His creatures, and suited to their dependence upon Him and the abilities with which He originally endowed them. And though we, by sin, have lost those abilities [but not our original faculties—A.W.P.], His right remains unalienable and therefore He can justly punish transgressors. And as it is just in respect to God, so it is *good* for man. His obedience to the law, and the favour of God therein, being his proper happiness and it is impossible for him to be happy in any other way. Only as I have hinted, to sinners these things *must* be apprehended according to the Gospel and to their new relation by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has obeyed the law and made atonement for sin on their behalf, so that through Him they are delivered from condemnation and entitled to all the benefits of His obedience. From Him likewise they receive the law *as a rule* enforced by His own example and their unspeakable obligations to His redeeming love. This makes obedience pleasing, and the strength they derive from Him makes it easy.

We may now proceed to inquire in the last place, What is it to use the law lawfully? The expression implies that it may be used unlawfully and it is so by too many. It is not a lawful use of the law to seek justification and acceptance with God by our obedience to it, because it is not appointed for this end, or capable of answering it, in our circumstances. The very attempt is a daring impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God, for if righteousness could come by the law, then Christ had died in vain (Gal 3:21), so that such a hope is not only groundless, but sinful

and when persisted in under the light of the Gospel, is no less than a willful rejection of the grace of God.

Again, it is an unlawful use of the law, that is, an abuse of it, an abuse both of law and of Gospel, to pretend that its accomplishment by Christ releases believers from any obligation to it as a rule. Such an assertion is not only wicked, but absurd and impossible in the highest degree, for the law is founded in the relation between the Creator and creature, and must unavoidably remain in force so long as that relation subsists. While He is God, and we are creatures, in every possible or supposable circumstance, He must have an unrivaled claim to our reverence, love, trust, service, and submission. No true believer can possibly admit a thought or wish of being released from his obligation of obedience to God, in whole or in part. He will rather start from it with abhorrence. But Satan labours to drive unstable souls from one extreme to another, and has too often succeeded. Wearied with vain endeavours to keep the law, that they might obtain life by it, and afterwards taking up with a notion of the Gospel devoid of power, they have at length despised that obedience which is the honour of a Christian and essentially belongs to his character, and have abused the grace of God to licentiousness. But we have not so learned Christ.

To speak affirmatively—the law is lawfully used as a means of conviction of sin. For this purpose it was promulgated at Sinai. The law entered that sin might abound—not to make men more wicked, though occasionally, and by abusing it, it has that effect, but to make them sensible *how wicked* they are. Having God's law in our hands, we are no longer to form our judgment by the maxims and customs of the world, where evil is called good and good evil, but are to try every principle, temper, and practice by this standard. Could men be prevailed upon to do this, they would soon listen to the Gospel with attention. On some, the Spirit of God does thus prevail. Then they earnestly make the jailer's inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" (Act 16:30). Here the work of grace begins and the sinner, convicted in his own conscience, is brought to Jesus for life.

Again, when we use the law as a glass, to behold the glory of God, we use it lawfully. His glory is eminently revealed in Christ, but much of it is with a special reference to the law and cannot be otherwise discovered. We see the perfection and excellence of the law in His life. God was glorified by His obedience as a man. What a perfect character did He exhibit! yet it is no other than a transcript of the law. Such would have been the character of Adam and all his race, had the law been duly obeyed. It appears, therefore, a wise and holy institution, fully capable of displaying that perfection of conduct by which man would have answered the end of his creation. As we see the inviolable strictness of the law in His death, the glory of God in the law is manifested. Though He was the beloved Son, and had yielded personal obedience in the utmost perfection, yet, when He stood in our place, to make atonement for sin, He was not spared. From what He endured in Gethsemane and upon the cross, we learn the meaning of that awful sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze 18:4).

Another lawful use of the law is to consult it as a rule and pattern, by which to regulate our spirit and conversation. The grace of God, received by faith, will dispose us to obedience in general, but through remaining darkness and ignorance, we are much at a loss as to particulars. We are, therefore, sent to the law, that we may learn how to walk worthy of God, who has called us to His kingdom and glory, and every precept has its proper place and use.

Lastly, we use the law lawfully when we improve it as a test whereby to judge of the exercise of grace. Believers differ so much from what they once were, and from what many still are, that without this right use of the law, comparing themselves with their former selves or with others, they would be prone to think more highly of their attainments than they ought. But when they

recur to this standard, they sink into the dust, and adopt the language of Job, “Behold I am vile” (Job 40:4) and “I cannot answer thee one of a thousand” (See Job 9:3).

From hence we may collect, in brief, how the law is good to them that use it lawfully. It furnishes them with a comprehensive and accurate view of the will of God and the path of duty. By the study of the law, they acquire an habitual spiritual taste of what is right or wrong. The exercised believer, like a skillful workman, has a rule in his hand, whereby he can measure and determine with certainty. Whereas others judge, as it were, by the eye and can only make a random guess, in which they are generally mistaken. It likewise, by reminding them of their deficiencies and short-comings, is a sanctified means of making and keeping them humble, and it exceedingly endears Jesus, the law-fulfiller to their hearts and puts them in mind of their absolute dependence upon Him every moment.

If these reflections should prove acceptable to you, I have my desire and I send them to you by the press, in hopes that the Lord may accompany them with His blessing to others. The subject is of great importance and were it rightly understood, might conduce to settle some of the angry controversies which have been lately agitated. Clearly to understand the distinction, connection, and harmony between the law and the Gospel, and their mutual subserviency to illustrate and establish each other, is a singular privilege and a happy means of preserving the soul from being entangled by errors on the right or the left.

*I am etc., John Newton, 1765, Author of “Oh for a closer walk with God,” “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,” “There is a fountain filled with blood,” etc.*

## DANGEROUS DAINTIES

“When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee” (Pro 23:1). We suppose that this verse has little or no voice for many of our readers, inasmuch as there is scarcely any likelihood *they* will ever be invited to dine with the President of the U.S.A. or the King of Great Britain. Alas that such a thought should find place in any Christian’s mind. Alas that the tendency to carnalize God’s Word should now be so general. Alas that our spiritual interpreters of the Living Oracles have well-nigh vanished from the earth. Yet even though there be no anointed teacher available to open up the Scriptures, ought it not to be self-evident that the Holy Spirit would never have placed such a verse as this in the Word if it had no application unto the rank and file of God’s people? And ought not *that* very consideration cause us to prayerfully seek for its hidden significance?

“When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.” There are other “rulers” mentioned in Scripture beside *civil* ones. Do we not read of “rulers of the congregation” (Exo 16:22), the “ruler of the synagogue” (Luk 8:41), as well as the “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12)? O how necessary it is to compare Scripture with Scripture! And to do that, a good concordance is essential—a book of far greater importance and value for the Christian than a dictionary. But perhaps some carping reader, who has been infected with the subtle poison of “dispensationalism,” objects, “But the ‘rulers of the congregation’ and of the ‘synagogue’ were

‘Jewish,’ and so pertain not to gatherings professedly Christian.” Alright, then turn to Matthew 24:45, where the Lord Jesus spoke of “a faithful and wise servant” whom He hath made “*ruler* over His household.”

It is the last-quoted Scripture which furnishes the key to our present passage, for the purpose why Christ makes him “ruler over His household” (let the P. B.’s carefully take note of the “one man ministry” here!) is “to give them *meat* in due season” (Mat 24:45). Thus when the Holy Spirit, in Proverbs 23:1, bids us “consider diligently” what is before us when we sit to eat “with a ruler,” He is referring to an *ecclesiastical* “ruler” or preacher. Now, not all of the religious “rulers” in Christendom today have been appointed by God. No indeed, far from it. Personally the writer very much doubts if two out of each thousand of the preachers, ministers, and missionaries the world over have been *divinely* called! Many of them are self-appointed, some of them sent out by men, most of them raised up by Satan.

The attentive reader of the Old and New Testaments will find that the false prophets have, in every age, greatly outnumbered the true. It is for this reason that God commands us to “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because *many* false prophets are gone out into the world” (1Jo 4:1). Thus the admonition given in Proverbs 23:1 has always been a timely one for God’s people to pay strict attention unto, and perhaps it was never more needful to give heed unto it than in the degenerate and apostate time in which *our* lot is cast. The preaching we listen to, and in measure absorb, has precisely the same effect upon our souls as does the food we eat have upon our bodies. If wholesome, it is nutritious—if injurious, it works harm.

“When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.” The tragic thing is that many of God’s own children today are so unspiritual, and therefore so spiritually ignorant, that *they know not how* TO “consider diligently” what is set “before them.” They know not what tests to apply, nor how to examine what they hear. So long as the preacher is “orthodox” and approved by those whom they consider “sound in the Faith,” they think his message is alright. So long as the preacher holds to the “fundamentals” of the Faith, they suppose that he is a true servant of God. So long as the preacher sticks close to the letter of Scripture, they imagine their souls are being fed with the sincere milk of the Word. Alas for the credulity of such unwary souls.

Is the reader ready to ask, “But what *other* tests are we to apply?” Let us help you to answer your own question by asking another. *What* criterion do you apply to the material food you eat? Are you satisfied if it has been prepared and cooked according to the best culinary books? Of course not. The chief thing is, *what effect* does your food produce? Does it agree with or upset your digestive system? Does it promote or injure your health? We are agreed, are we not? Very good, now apply the same rule or test unto the spiritual—or, we should say, more correctly, the “religious”—food of which you are partaking. *What effect* is it having upon your character and conduct, what is it producing in your heart and life?

But we must not stop there with a mere generalization. If souls are to be helped today, the servant of God must be precise and enter into details. Ponder carefully these questions, dear reader. Does the preaching you listen to come home to your heart in the power of the Holy Spirit? If not, what is the use of hearing it? Does the preaching you hear pierce you, search your conscience, condemn you, and make you cry, “O wretched man that I am”? Or does it add to your store of intellectual knowledge, minister to your complacency, and make you feel self-satisfied? Do not treat these questions lightly, we beg you, or you are very likely to prove your own worst enemy. Face them fairly and squarely, as in the presence of God.

“Consider *diligently*” what is set before thee from the pulpit, for it *must* do one of two things—help or harm you. It either promotes humility or feeds pride. It either stimulates to work

out your own salvation “with fear and trembling,” or it fosters carnal security and self-confidence. It either drives you to your knees, or it more and more lulls your spiritual sensibilities. It either makes you more conscientious and careful about all the details of your daily life, or more careless and callous. It either causes you to cry unto God day and night for Him to work in your heart a deeper and more constant hatred of evil, or (probably unconsciously) leads you to think more lightly of sin—excusing “little” failures, and consoling yourself with the thought that none of us reach perfection in this life; whereas God says, “Be ye holy in *all* manner of conversation” or “behaviour” (1Pe 1:15).

“And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite” (Pro 23:2). This is strong language, is it not? Yes, and the subject calls for it. So very few realize the fearful consequences which follow from a disregard of that command of Christ’s, “*Take heed* what ye hear” (Mar 4:24). False doctrine has the same effect upon the soul as poison does upon the body. But Satan appeals to the pride of so many and succeeds in making them believe *they* are immune, that they are so “well established in the truth” that listening to error cannot injure them. Therefore does the Holy Spirit say, “*Be not deceived*: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33), not they may, but DO! Yes, even though you are quite unaware of it.

“And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.” This is plainly a word of warning for those who are consumed with curiosity to hear every new “evangelist” or “Bible-teacher” who comes to town—those who have an insatiable appetite to sample every religious “feast” (?) that is spread in their community. *That* is what is meant by “a man given to appetite,” one who craves to hear the latest pulpit or platform sensationalist. To all such God says, Take yourself in hand, and use no half measures to check this dangerous tendency. It is at your imminent peril you disregard this divine admonition. If you disobey, Satan will either slay you or else drug, and put you soundly to sleep.

“Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat” (Pro 23:3). Yes, he has “dainties” to offer you, that is why so many are attracted to his table. These “dainties” are skillfully varied to meet different tastes. For “prophetic students,” they are spicy items from the newspapers, served under the name of “signs of the times.” But these are “deceitful meat,” for they leave the soul starved and barren. There is *no spiritual* nutriment in them! For the energetic young people, there is a pleasing presentation of “Christian service,” calling upon them to engage in “work for the Lord.” These too are “deceitful meat,” for they neither edify (build up) nor lead to a closer walking with Christ, instead, they take the eye *off Christ*, unto the “perishing multitudes,” as though God were unable to save His own elect without *our* assistance! “Keep *thy* heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23) is God’s word unto you.

For others there is a regular exposition of “*our* doctrines” which are indeed “dainties” unto those of a theological turn of mind. “Yes, but ‘our doctrines’ are *Scripture* doctrines and surely *they* cannot be ‘deceitful meat’!” Ah dear friend, Satan frequently transforms himself into “an angel of light.” He knows full well that no harm will be done unto *his* cause while doctrinal dissertations are addressed to the intellect and the conscience is not searched. Unless there be a *practical application* made of each Scripture doctrine, the heart is not touched nor the soul humbled, instead, pride is fed and the head is merely stuffed with a theoretical knowledge of the truth. Mark this well—doctrine *divorced from* experimental and practical preaching is highly injurious!

What the writer and reader most need is not “dainties,” but “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8) to purge us of pride, independency, self-love! We need to be fed “with the bread of tears” (Psa 80:5) and “the water of affliction” (Isa 30:20). Only that ministry truly helps which causes us to mourn

before God, which brings us into the dust, which makes us loathe ourselves. Perhaps some will reply, “I want a ministry where *Christ* is exalted.” Good, but do you relish a ministry which gives you to see how *un-Christlike* you are in your ways, how little you are following the example which He has left us? A faithful and well-balanced ministry of “Christ” includes His teaching upon discipleship, His claims and demands upon us, His precepts and warnings. Beware of flesh-pleasing “dainties,” dear reader.

We pass over the intervening ones and come to verse 8 of Proverbs 23, “The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.” Yes, if you are really a child of God, *this* is what the Spirit will, sooner or later, work in you. He will yet make your heart nauseated with those flesh-pleasing “dainties” which you now so much relish. He will yet cause *you* to turn with disgust from that which the empty professors feed upon with such avidity. We speak from painful experience. Sheep cannot thrive on that which goats eat! If your preacher is admired and eulogized by white-washed worldlings, you may be certain that his ministry cannot help you. If large crowds enthusiastically hear him, it is a sure sign that he is not ministering the Word in the power of the Spirit!

In closing, let us point out that all we have said above about “considering diligently” what preaching you attend, applies with equal force to listening-in to the radio! “*Take heed* what ye hear.” If it does not make your conscience more tender, it will make it more callous. The same applies to your *reading*. The great majority of the “orthodox” and “sound” magazines being printed today, can only *harm* you, for they contain nothing to make you weep before God, nothing to increase the “fear of the Lord” in your soul, nothing that will lead to an increasing mortifying of your members which are upon the earth. If you have proven this to be the case, then from now on *shun them* as you would a plague. “Cease ye from man” (Isa 2:22) and feed upon the Word.

*Ill that He blesses is our good,  
And unblest good is ill,  
And all is right that seems most wrong  
If it be His sweet will.*

# October

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 10. The Advent of the Spirit (Part 2)

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came as He had never come before. Something then transpired which inaugurated a new era for the world, a new power for righteousness, a new basis for fellowship. On that day the fearing Peter was transformed into the intrepid evangelist. On that day the new wine of Christianity burst the old bottles of Judaism and the Word went forth in a multiplicity of Gentile tongues. On that day more souls seem to have been truly regenerated than during all the three and a half years of Christ's public ministry. What had happened? It is not enough to say that the Spirit of God was given, for He had been given long before, both to individuals and the nation of Israel (Neh 9:20, Hag 2:5). No, the pressing question is, *In what sense* was He then given? This leads us to carefully consider *the meaning of the Spirit's advent*.

1. *It was the fulfillment of the divine promise.* First, of the Father Himself. During the Old Testament dispensation, He declared again and again that He would pour out the Spirit upon His people. See Proverbs 1:23, Isaiah 32:15, Joel 2:28, etc. and now these gracious declarations were accomplished. Second, of John the Baptist. When he was stirring the hearts of multitudes by his call to repentance and his demand of baptism, many thought he must be the long-expected Messiah, but he declared unto them, "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the *Holy Spirit and with fire*" (Luk 3:15-16). Accordingly He did so on the day of Pentecost, as Acts 2:3-4 plainly show.

Third, of Christ. Seven times over the Lord Jesus avowed that He would give or send the Holy Spirit: Luke 24:49; John 7:37-39; 14:16-19; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 1:5, 8. From these we may particularly notice, "When the Comforter is come, whom *I will send* unto you from the Father...He shall testify of me" (Joh 15:26). "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, *I will send him* unto you" (Joh 16:7). That which took place in John 20:22 and in Acts 2 was the fulfillment of those promises. In them we behold the *faith* of the Mediator. He had appropriated the promise which the Father had given to Him, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *he* hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Act 2:33). It was by faith's anticipation the Lord Jesus spoke as He did in the above passages.

“The Holy Spirit was God’s ascension gift to Christ, that He might be bestowed by Christ, as His ascension gift to the Church. Hence Christ had said, ‘Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you’ (Luk 24:49). This was the promised gift of the Father to the Son and the Saviour’s promised gift to His believing people. How easy now to reconcile the apparent contradiction of Christ’s earlier and later words, ‘I will pray the Father, and *he shall give you* another Comforter’ (Joh 14:16); and then, afterward, ‘If I depart, I will send him unto you’ (Joh 16:7). The Spirit was the Father’s answer to the prayer of the Son and so the gift was transferred by Him to the mystical body of which He is the head” (A. T. Pierson, 1837-1911, in “The Acts of the Holy Spirit”).

2. *It was the fulfillment of an important Old Testament type.* It is this which explains to us why the Spirit was given on the day of “Pentecost,” which was one of the principal religious feasts of Israel. Just as there was a profound significance to Christ’s dying on Passover Day (giving us the antitype of Exodus 12), so there was in the coming of the Spirit on the fiftieth day after Christ’s resurrection. The type is recorded in Leviticus 23, to which we can here make only the briefest allusion. In the fourth verse of Leviticus 23 we read, “These are the feasts of the LORD.” The first of them is the passover (v. 5), and the second “unleavened bread” (v. 6), etc., the two together speaking of the sinless Christ offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of His people. The third is the “wave-sheaf” (v. 10, etc.) which was the “firstfruits” of the harvest (v. 10), presented to God “on the morrow after the [Jewish] Sabbath” (v. 11), a figure of Christ’s resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:23.

The fourth is the feast of “weeks” (see Exo 34:22, Deu 16:10, 16), so called because of the seven complete weeks of Leviticus 23:15, also known as “Pentecost” (which means “fiftieth”) because of the “fifty days” of Leviticus 23:16. It was then the balance of the harvest *began* to be gathered in. On that day, Israel was required to present unto God “two wave loaves,” which were also designated “the *firstfruits* unto the LORD” (Lev 23:17). The antitype of which was the saving of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost—the “firstfruits” of Christ’s atonement, compare James 1:18. The first loaf represented those redeemed from among the Jews, the second loaf was *anticipatory* and pointed to the gathering in of God’s elect from among the Gentiles, begun in Acts 10.

3. *It was the beginning of a new dispensation.* This was plainly intimated in the type of Leviticus 23, for on the day of Pentecost, Israel was definitely required to offer a “*new* meat offering unto the LORD” (Lev 23:16). Still more clearly was it foreannounced in a yet more important and significant type, namely, that of the beginning of the Mosaic economy, which took place only when the nation of Israel formally entered into covenant relationship with Jehovah at Sinai. Now it is exceedingly striking to observe that just *fifty days* elapsed from the time when the Hebrews emerged from the house of bondage till they received the law from the mouth of Moses. They left Egypt on the fifteenth of the first month (Num 33:3) and arrived at Sinai at the first of the third month (Exo 19:1—note “the same day”), which would be the forty-sixth. The next day Moses went up into the mount and three days later the law was delivered (Exo 19:11)! And just as there was a period of fifty days from Israel’s deliverance from Egypt until the beginning of the Mosaic economy, so the same length of time followed the resurrection of Christ (when His people were delivered from hell) to the beginning of the Christian economy!

That a new dispensation commenced at Pentecost further appears from the “tongues like as of fire” (Act 2:3). When John the Baptist announced that Christ would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and with fire,” the last words might have suggested material burning to any people except Jews, but in their minds far other thoughts would be awakened. To them it would recall the scene when their great progenitor asked God, who promised he should inherit that land wherein he was a



stranger, “Lord GOD, *whereby shall I know* that I shall inherit it?” (Gen 15:8). The answer was, “Behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp,” etc. (Gen 15:17-18). It would recall the fire which Moses saw in the burning bush. It would recall the “pillar of fire” which guided by night, and the Shekinah glory which descended and filled the tabernacle. Thus, in the promise of a baptism by fire, they would at once recognize the approach of *a new manifestation of the presence and power of God!*

Again, when we read that, “There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it *sat* upon each of them” (Act 2:3), further evidence is found that a new dispensation had now commenced. “The word ‘sat’ in Scripture marks *an ending and a beginning*. The process of preparation is ended and the established order has begun. It marks the end of creation and the beginning of normal forces. ‘In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and *rested* the seventh day’ (Exo 20:11). There is no weariness in God. He did not rest from fatigue. What it means is that all creative work was accomplished. The same figure is used of the Redeemer. Of Him it is said ‘When he had by himself purged our sins, [He] *sat down* on the right hand of the Majesty on high’ (Heb 1:3). No other priesthood had sat down. The priests of the temple ministered standing, because their ministry was provisional and preparatory, a parable and prophecy. Christ’s own ministry was part of the preparation for the coming of the Spirit. Until He ‘sat down’ in glory, there could be no dispensation of the Spirit....When the work of redemption was complete, the Spirit was given and when He came He ‘*sat*.’ He reigns in the Church as Christ reigns in the heavens” (Samuel Chadwick, 1860-1932, in “The Way to Pentecost”).

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 70. The Faith of Moses’ Parents (11:23)

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents” (Heb 11:23). A considerable length of time elapsed between what is recorded in the preceding verse and what is here before us. That interval is bridged by what is found in Exodus 1. There we see a marked revolution taking place in the lot of the Hebrews. In the days of Joseph, the Egyptians had been kind, giving them the land of Goshen to dwell in. Then followed another dynasty and a king arose who “knew not Joseph” (Exo 1:8)—probably a foreigner who had conquered Egypt. This new monarch was a tyrant of the worst kind, who sorely oppressed the descendants of Abraham. So subject to drastic changes are the fortunes both of individuals and nations, hence the force of those words, “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him” (Ecc 7:14).

The policy of the new ruler of Egypt quickly became apparent, “And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war,

they join also unto our enemies” (Exo 1:9-10). Ah, but though “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand” (Pro 19:21). So it proved here, for “the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew” (Exo 1:12). Yes, “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations” (Psa 33:10-11).

Next, the king of Egypt gave orders to the midwives that every male child of the Hebrews should be slain at birth (Exo 1:15-16). But all the laws which men may make against the promises that God has given to His church are doomed to certain failure. God had promised unto Abraham a numerous “seed” (Gen 13:15) and had declared to Jacob, “Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation” (Gen 46:3). As well, then, might Pharaoh attempt to stop the sun from shining as prevent the growth of the children of Israel. Therefore do we read, “But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive” (Exo 1:17).

Refusing to accept defeat, “Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river” (Exo 1:22). Now that the execution of this barbarous edict had been entrusted unto his own people, no doubt Pharaoh imagined that success was fully assured for his evil design. Yet it was at this very season that God brought to the birth the one who was to emancipate his suffering nation. “How blind are poor sinful mortals, in all their contrivances against the church of God. When they think all things secure, and that they shall not fail of their end, that their counsels are laid so deep as not to be blown upon, their power so uncontrollable, and the way in which they are engaged so effectual, that God Himself can hardly deliver it out of their hands, He that sits on high laughs them to scorn, and with an Almighty facility lays provisions for the deliverance of His church, and for *their* ultimate ruin” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

“And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive. And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son” (Exo 1:21 and 2:1-2). Amram and Jochebed refused to be intimidated by the cruel commandment of the king, and acted as though no injunction had been issued by him. Were they reckless and foolish? No indeed, they took their orders from a far higher authority than any earthly potentate. The fear of the Lord was upon them and therefore they were delivered from that fear of man which bringeth a snare. In covenant relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this godly couple from the tribe of Levi allowed not the wrath of man to disrupt their domestic happiness.

“‘By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents’ (Heb 11:23). It is the faith of Moses’ parents that is here celebrated. But because it is mentioned principally to introduce the discourse of himself and his faith, and also that which is spoken belongs unto *his* honour, it is thus peculiarly expressed. He saith not ‘By faith the parents of Moses when he was born, hid him,’ but ‘By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents’; that is, by the faith of the parents who hid him” (John Owen). Ah, here is the explanation of the conduct of Amram and Jochebed. It was “by faith” they acted. It was a living, supernatural, spiritual faith which sustained their hearts in this crisis and kept them “in perfect peace” (Isa 26:3). Nothing will so quieten the mind and still its fears as a real trusting in the Lord of hosts.

The birth of Moses occurred during the very height and fury of the attack that was being made upon the infant males of the Hebrews. Herein we may discover a striking foreshadowment of the attempt which was made upon the life of the Christ-child, when, in his efforts to slay Him, Herod

gave orders that all the children in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof from two years old and under, should be slain (Mat 2:16). Many a typical representation of the principal events in the life of the Redeemer is to be found in the Old Testament, and at scores of points did Moses in particular prefigure the great Deliverer of His people. It is a deeply interesting line of study, which we commend to our readers, to go over the history of Moses and note down the many details in which he pictured the Lord Jesus.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment” (Heb 11:23). It seems clear from the final clause that Pharaoh had either given orders that the Hebrews should notify his officers whenever a male child was born unto them, or that they themselves should throw him into the river. Instead of complying with this atrocious enactment, the parents of Moses concealed their infant for three months, which supplies us with a clear example of, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Act 5:29). It is true that the Lord requires His people to “be subject unto the higher powers” (Rom 13:1), but this holds good *only so long as* the “higher powers” (human governors) require the Christian to do nothing which God has forbidden or prohibit nothing which God has commanded. The inferior authority must always give place before the superior. As this is a principle of great importance practically, and one concerning which confusion exists in some quarters, let us amplify a little.

Holy Scripture must never be made to contradict itself. One of its precepts must never be pressed so far as to nullify another. Each one is to be interpreted and applied in harmony with the general analogy of faith and in the light of the modifications which the Spirit Himself has given. For example, children are required to honour their parents, yet Ephesians 6:1 shows that their obedience is to be “in the Lord.” If a parent required something directly opposed unto Holy Writ, then he is not to be obeyed. Christian wives are required by God to submit themselves unto their husbands, and that “in everything” (Eph 5:24), obeying them (1Pe 3:6). Nevertheless, their subjection is to be of the same character as that of the church unto Christ (Eph 5:24) and inasmuch as He never demands anything from the church which is evil, so He does not require the wife to obey injunctions which are positively harmful—if a thoughtless husband should insist on that which would be highly injurious to his wife’s health, she is to refuse him. Submission does not mean slavery!

Now the same modification we have pointed out above obtains in connection with the exhortations of Romans 13:1-7. In proof, let us cite a clear example to the point from either Testament. In Daniel 3, we find that the king of Babylon—the head of the “powers that be”—erected an image unto himself and demanded that, on a given signal, all must “fall down and worship” the same (Dan 3:5). But the three Hebrew captives declared, “Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan 3:18), and the Lord vindicated their non-compliance. In Acts 4, we see Peter and John arrested by the Jewish “powers,” who, “Commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Act 4:18). Did the apostles submit to this ordinance? No, instead they said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (Act 4:19). As Romans 13:4 declares, the magistrate is “the minister of God to thee *for good*,” should he require that which the Word condemns as evil, he is not to be obeyed.

And what was it that enabled the parents of Moses to act so boldly and set at nought the royal edict? Our text furnishes clear answer. It was “by faith” they acted. Had they been destitute of faith, most probably the “king’s commandment” would have filled them with dismay, and in order that their own lives should be spared, would have promptly informed his officers of the

birth of Moses. But instead of so notifying the Egyptians, they concealed the fact, and though by preserving the child they followed a course which was highly hazardous to sense, yet under God it became the path of security. Thus, the particular aspect of our theme which here receives illustration is *the courage and boldness of faith*. Faith overcoming the fear of man. That brings before us another characteristic of this heavenly grace, one which evidences its excellency and one which should move us to pray daily for an increase of the same.

Faith is a spiritual grace which enables its possessor to look away from human terrors and to confide in an unseen God. It declares, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psa 27:1). True it is that *this* faith is not always in exercise, yea, more often is its bright shining overcast by the clouds of unbelief and eclipsed by the murky dust which Satan raises in the soul. We say, “this faith,” for there are thousands of professing Christians all around us who boast that *their* faith is constantly in exercise and that they are rarely if ever tormented by doubts or filled with alarms. Ah, my reader, the “faith” of such people is not “the faith of God’s elect” (Ti 1:1), entirely dependent upon the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. No, it is but a natural faith in the bare letter of Scripture, which by an act of their own will they can call into exercise whenever they please. But unto such, the many, “Fear nots” of God’s Word have no application! But when the dew of heaven falls upon the regenerated heart, its language is, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Psa 56:3).

Great indeed is the power of a God-given and God-sustained faith, not only to produce outward works, but to affect the workings of the soul within. This is something which is not sufficiently considered these days, when attention is confirmed almost exclusively to “visible results.” Faith regulates the affections. It curbs impetuosity and works patience. It chases away gloom and brings peace and joy. It subdues carnal fears and produces courage. Moreover, faith not only sustains the heart under severe trials, performs difficult duties, but (as the sequel shows) obtains important benefits. How pertinent, then, was this particular case unto those to whom this epistle was first sent! How well was it calculated to encourage the sorely-tried and wavering Hebrews to remain faithful to Christ and to trust God with the issue and outcome!

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents” (Heb 11:23). Probably two things are included in these words. First, that they concealed all tidings of his birth. Second, that they hid him in some part of the house. No doubt their diligence was accomplished by fervent cries to God and the putting forth of a daily trust in Him. The fact that it was “by faith” that they “hid” him, shows that real spiritual faith is cautious and wary, and not reckless and presumptuous. Though faith overcomes carnal fear, yet it does not disdain the use of lawful means for overcoming danger. It is fanaticism, and not faith, which tempts God. To needlessly expose ourselves unto danger is sinful. Faith is no enemy unto lawful means as Acts 27:31 plainly enough shows.

It is to be observed that the words of our text go beyond Exodus 2:2, where the preserving of Moses is attributed unto his mother. As both the parents were engaged in the hazard, both had a hand in the work. No doubt Amram took the lead in advice and contriving, and Jochebed in the actual execution. As the parents have a joint interest in their children, both should share in the care and training of them, each seeking to help the other. Where there is an agreement between husband and wife in faith and in the fear of God, it makes way for a blessed success in their duties. When difficult tasks confront husbands and wives, it is their wisdom to apply themselves unto that part and phase of it which each is best suited for. “It is a happy thing when yoke-fellows draw together in the yoke of faith, as the heirs of the grace of God; and where they do this in a

religious concern for the good of their children, to preserve them not only from those who would destroy their lives, but corrupt their minds” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

The “three months” teaches us that the parents of Moses *persevered* in that which they began well. They were prudent from the hour of his birth and they maintained their vigilance. It is no use to shut the stable-door when the horse is gone. Care in preventing danger is to be continued as long as the danger is threatened. Some, perhaps, may ask, Would it be right for the people of God today to give shelter to one of His saints or servants who was being unjustly hounded by “the powers that be”? Surely, it is always the duty of love to shield others from harm. But suppose the hidden ones are being inquired after by the authorities, may they still be concealed? Yes, if it is done without the impeachment of the truth, for it is never permissible to lie—to do so shows a distrust of the sufficiency of God. Should the officers ask whether you are sheltering one they seek, either remain silent or so prudently word your answer as will neither betray the party nor be guilty of falsehood.

Others may ask, Since God purposed to make Moses the leader of His people and accomplish such a memorable work through him, why did He not by some wonderful and powerful miracle preserve him from the rage of Pharaoh? Answer: God was able to send a legion of angels for his protection or to have visibly displayed His might by other means, but He did not. It is generally God’s pleasure to show His power through weak and despised means. Thus it was during the infancy of His own incarnate Son. God warned Joseph by a dream, and he took the young child and His mother into Egypt, remaining there till Herod was dead. Frequently it pleases the Most High to magnify His providence by things which men despise, by feeble instruments, and this, that it may the more plainly appear the excellency of the power is *of Him*.

In the preservation of the infant Moses, we may see a blessed illustration of how God preserves His elect through infancy and childhood, and from all that threatens their existence prior to the time when He regenerates them. This is expressed in Jude 1, “Preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” How blessed is it for the Christian to look back behind the time when God called him out of darkness into His marvelous light and discern His guarding hand upon him when he was dead in trespasses and sins. There are few if any of the Lord’s people who cannot recall more than one incident in early life when there was “but a step” betwixt them and death. Yet even then, as in the case of the infant Moses, a kind Providence was watching over them. Then let us return thanks for the same.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, *because they saw he was a proper child*; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandments” (Heb 11:23). It is really surprising how many of the commentators, led by sentiment, have quite missed the meaning of this verse. Exodus 2:2 states that his mother saw “that he was a goodly child.” The Hebrew word (“tob”) being the same term whereby God approved of His works of creation and declared them perfect (Gen 1), from which the conclusion has been drawn that it was the exceeding fairness or beauty of the babe which so endeared him to his parents they were moved to disregard the king’s edict, and take special pains to preserve him. But this is only carnalizing Scripture, in fact, contradicting what the Holy Spirit has here said.

Hebrews 11:23 distinctly affirms that it was “by faith” the parents of Moses acted and *this* it is which explains their conduct. Now Romans 10:17 tells us, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Thus Amram and Jochebed must have received a divine revelation (not recorded in the Old Testament) and this word from God formed the foundation of their confidence, and supplied the motive-power of what they did. It is true they knew from the prophecy given to Abram (Gen 15) that the time for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was

drawing near, as they also knew from the prediction of Joseph (Gen 50:24) that God was going to undertake for His people. Yet we are persuaded that Hebrews 11:23 refers to something more definite and specific. Most probably the Lord made known to these parents that *their* child was to be the promised deliverer and furnished them beforehand with a description of him.

This revelation which Amram and Jochebed “heard” from God they *believed*, and that, before Moses was born. When, in due time, he was given to them, they “saw he was a proper child”—it was *the discernment of faith* and not the mere admiration of nature. As Acts 7:20 declares, “in which time Moses was born, and was beautiful to God” (Bagster International), which indicates an appearance of something divine or supernatural. They recognized he was peculiarly grateful and acceptable to God. They perceived something remarkable in him, which was the divine token to them that he would be the deliverer of Israel. “Probably there was some mark of future excellency impressed on the child, which gave promise of something extraordinary” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). “The beauty of the Lord set upon him as a presage that he was born to great things and that by conversing with God his face would shine (Exo 34:29), and what bright and illustrious actions he should do for the deliverance of Israel, and how his name should shine in the sacred record” (Matthew Henry).

Resting with implicit confidence upon the revelation which they had received from Jehovah, their faith now confirmed by God’s mark of identification upon the babe, the parents of Moses preferred its safety before their own. It was not simply they trusted God for the outcome, but in their souls was that faith which is “the substance of things hoped for” (Heb 11:1), and in consequence “they were *not afraid* of the king’s commandments.” Had it been only a natural or human admiration which they had for a signally beautiful child, then it had been “by affection” or “by infatuation” they hid the infant and that would only have intensified their “fear,” for the more they admired the infant, the more afraid would they have been of harm befalling it.

Mere beauty is by no means a sure sign of excellency, as 1 Samuel 16:7, 2 Samuel 14:25, Proverbs 31:30 plainly enough show. No, the infant Moses was beautiful *to God* (Act 7:20), and perceiving this, Amram and Jochebed acted accordingly. First, they “hid” him for three months, “and when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes,” etc. (Exo 2:3). It may be that the Egyptians searched the houses of the Hebrews every three months. No doubt it was under the divine direction that the parents of Moses now acted, for surely the placing of this precious child by the brink of the fatal “river” (Exo 1:22) was the last thing that carnal reason had suggested! We do not at all agree with those who think the faith of Moses’ parents wavered when they placed him in the ark. When one lawful means of preservation from persecution will no longer secure, it is a duty to betake ourselves unto some other which is more likely to do so—Matthew 10:23.

In the kind providence of God, His interests and ours are often twined together, and then nature is allowed to work, though even then, grace must bear sway. So it was here. The parents of Moses had received a direct commandment from God how to act and what to do (as the “by faith” clearly denotes), and in their case, what He prescribed harmonized with their own feelings. But sometimes God’s requirements and our natural affections clash, as was the case when He required Abraham to offer up Isaac, and then the claims of the lower must yield to the Higher. When the current of human affection clashes not with God’s express precepts we may follow it, for He allows us to take in the help of nature, “a brother beloved...*both in the flesh*, and in the Lord” (Phm 1:16).

# THE LIFE OF DAVID

## 22. His Unbelief

After Saul's departure (1Sa 26:25), David took stock of his situation, but unfortunately he left God out of his calculations. During tedious and trying delays, and especially when outward things seem to be all going against us, there is grave danger of giving way to unbelief. Then it is we are very apt to forget former mercies and fear the worst. And when faith staggers, obedience wavers and self-expedients are frequently employed, which later involve us in great difficulties. So it was now with the one whose varied life we are seeking to trace. As David considered the situation he was still in, remembered the inconstancy and treachery of Saul, things appeared very gloomy to him. Knowing full well the king's jealousy, and perhaps reasoning that he would now regard him with still more evil eye, since God so favoured him, David feared the worst.

"The moment in which faith attains any triumph is often one of peculiar danger. Self-confidence may be engendered by success and pride may spring out of honour that humility has won. Or else, if faithfulness, after having achieved its victory, still finds itself left in the midst of danger and sorrow, the hour of triumph may be succeeded by one of undue depression and sorrowful disappointment. And thus it was with David. He had obtained this great moral victory, but his circumstances were still unchanged. Saul yet continued to be king of Israel—himself remained a persecuted outcast. As the period, when he had before spared the life of Saul, had been followed by days of lengthened sorrow, so he probably anticipated an indefinite prolongation of similar sufferings, and his heart quailed at the prospect" (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

Solemn is it to mark the contrast between what is found at the close of 1 Samuel 26 and that which is recorded in the opening verses of the next chapter. To question the faithfulness and goodness of God is fearful wickedness, though there are some who regard it as a very trivial offense. In fact, there are those who well-nigh exalt the doubts and fears of Christians into fruits and graces, and evidences of great advancement in spiritual experience. It is sad indeed to find a certain class of men petting and pampering people in unbelief and distrust of God, and being in this matter unfaithful both to their Master and to the souls of His saints. Not that we are an advocate of smiting the feeble of the flock, but their *sins* we must denounce. Any teaching which causes Christians to pity themselves, for their failings and falls, is evil and to deny that doubting the loving kindness of God is a very heinous offense, is highly reprehensible.

"And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines" (1Sa 27:1). "And yet the hour of Saul's fall and of his own deliverance was close at hand. The Lord was about to interfere, and to extricate His faithful servant from his long and sore afflictions. Almost the very last hour of his trial under Saul had come, yet at that last moment he failed. So hard is it for

‘patience to have her *perfect* work.’ David had just said, ‘*Let the LORD* deliver me out of all tribulation.’ It was a strong, and no doubt a sincere expression of confidence in God, but the feeling of the heart, as well as the expression of the lips, may often exceed the reality of our spiritual strength, and therefore, not unfrequently, when strong expressions have been used, they who have used them are tested by some peculiar trial; that so, if there be weakness, it may be detected, and no flesh glory in the presence of God” (Benjamin W. Newton).

“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1). Such a conclusion was positively erroneous. There was *no evidence in proof* thereof. He had been placed in perilous positions before, but God had never deserted him. His trials had been many and varied, but God had always made for him “a way to escape” (1Co 10:13). It was therefore *contrary to the evidence*. Once he had said, “Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them” (1Sa 17:36). Why not reason like that now? and say, “Thy servant slew Goliath, was delivered from the javelin of a madman, escaped the evil devices of Doeg, and so he shall continue to escape out of the hand of Saul!” Moreover, David’s rash conclusion was *contrary to promise*. Samuel had poured upon his head the anointing oil of God’s earnest that he should be king—how then could he be slain by Saul?

How is David’s unbelief to be accounted for? “First, because he was a man. The best of men are men at the best, and man at his best is such a creature that well might David himself say, ‘Lord what is man?’....If faith never gave place to unbelief, we might be tempted to lift up the believer into a demigod and think him something more than mortal. That we might see that a man full of faith is still a man, that we might glory in infirmities, since by them the power of God is the more clearly proved, therefore God was pleased to let the feebleness of man grievously show itself. As it was not David who achieved those former victories, but *God’s grace in David*, and now, when that is removed for a moment, see what Israel’s champion becomes!

“Second, David had been exposed to a very long trial. Not for one week, but for month after month, he had been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. Now a man could bear one trial, but a perpetuity of tribulations is very hard to bear....Such was David’s trial—always safe but always harassed, always secure through God, but always hunted about by his foe. No place could give him any ease. If he went into Keilah, then the citizens would deliver him up. If he went into the woods of Ziph, then the Ziphites betrayed him. If he went even to the priest of God, there was that dog of a Doeg to go to Saul and accuse the priest. Even in Engedi or in Adullam, he was not secure. Secure, I grant you, in God, but always persecuted by his foe. Now, this was enough to make the wise man mad and to make the faithful man doubt. Do not judge too harshly of David, at least judge just as harshly of yourselves.

“Third, David had passed through some strong excitements of mind. Just a day or so before he had gone forth with Abishai in the moonlight to the field where Saul and his hosts lay sleeping. They passed the outer circle where the common soldiers lay, and quietly and stealthily, the two heroes passed without awakening any. They came at last to the spot where the captains of the hundreds slept and they trod over their slumbering bodies without arousing them. They reached the spot where Saul lay and David had to hold back Abishai’s hand from slaying him, so he escaped from this temptation, as he had aforetime. Now, brethren, a man may do these great things helped by God, but do you know it is a sort of natural law with us, that after a strong excitement, *there is a re-action!* It was thus with Elijah after his victory over the prophets of Baal. Later, he ran from Jezebel, and cried ‘Let me die.’

“But there was another reason, for we are not to exculpate David. He sinned and that not merely through infirmity, but through evil of heart. It seems to us that David had *restrained*



*prayer*. In every other action of David you find some hint that he asked counsel of the Lord....But this time what did he talk with? Why, with the most deceitful thing he could have found—with his own heart....Having restrained prayer, he did the fool's act. He forgot his God, he looked only at his enemy, and it was no wonder that when he saw the strength of the cruel monarch and the pertinacity of his persecution, he said 'I shall one day fall before him.' Brothers and sisters, would you wish to hatch the egg of unbelief till it turns into a scorpion? Restrain prayer! Would you see evils magnified and mercies diminish? Would you find your tribulations increased sevenfold and your faith diminished in proportion? Restrain prayer!" (Condensed from Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

"I shall now perish one day." Ah, has not this been the cry of many a Satan-harassed saint! He looks within and sees what God has done for him—that he has desires and aspirations which he never had before conversion, so that the things he once hated he now loves. He realizes there has been a radical change, such as mere nature could not possibly effect, and his spirit rejoices in the hope set before him. *But* he also sees so very much corruption within him, and finds so much weakness that aids and abets that corruption. He sees temptations and sore trials awaiting him, and cold despondency falls upon his heart, and doubts and questions vex his mind. He is tripped up and has a bad fall, and then Satan roars in his ear, "Now God has forsaken thee," and he is almost ready to sink into despair.

"And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath" (1Sa 27:2). Under the pressure of trial, *relief* is what the flesh most desires, and unless the mind be stayed upon God, there is grave danger of seeking to take things into our own hands. Such was the case with David. Having leaned unto his own understanding, being occupied entirely with the things of sight and sense, he now sought relief in his own way and followed a course which was the very opposite to that which the Lord had enjoined him (1Sa 22:5). There God had told him to depart from the land of Moab and go into the land of Judah, and there He had marvelously preserved him. How this shows us what poor weak creatures the best of us are and how low our graces sink when the Spirit does not renew them!

In what is here before us (1Sa 27:2), we are shown the ill effects of David's unbelief. "First, it made him do a foolish thing. The same foolish thing which he had rued once before. Now we say a burnt child always dreads the flame, but David had been burnt and yet, in his unbelief, he puts his hand into the same fire again. He went once to Achish, king of Gath, and the Philistines identified him, and being greatly afraid, David feigned himself mad in their hands and they drove him away. Now he goes to the same Achish again! Yes, and mark it, my brethren, although you and I know the bitterness of sin, yet if we are left to our own unbelief, we shall fall into the same sin again. I know we have said, 'No, never, never, I know so much by experience what an awful thing this is.' Your experience is not worth a rush to you apart from the continual restraints of grace. If your faith fail, everything else goes down with it and you, hoary-headed professor, will be as big a fool as a very boy, if God lets you along.

"Second, he went over to the Lord's enemies. Would you have believed it. He that killed Goliath, sought a refuge in Goliath's land. He who smote the Philistines, trusts in the Philistines—nay, more, he who was Israel's champion, becomes the chamberlain to Achish, for Achish said, 'Therefore will I make thee keeper of my head forever,' and David became thus the captain of the body-guard of the king of Philistia and helped preserve the life of one who was the enemy of God's Israel. Ah, if we doubt God, we shall soon be numbered among God's foes. Inconsistency will win us over into the ranks of His enemies and they will be saying, 'What do these Hebrews have?' 'The just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have

no pleasure in him’—the two sentences are put together as if the failure of our faith would surely lead to a turning back to sin.

“Third, he was on the verge of still worse sin—of overt acts of warfare against the Lord’s people. David’s having become the friend of Achish, when Achish went to battle against Israel, he said to him, ‘Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go with me to battle, thou and thy men,’ and David professed his willingness to go. We believe it was only a feigned willingness, but then, you see, we convict him again of falsehood....It is true that God interposed and prevented him fighting against Israel, but this was no credit to David, for you know, brethren, we are guilty of a sin, even if we do not commit it, if we are willing to commit it. The last effect of David’s sin was this—it brought him into great trial” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

O my readers, what a solemn, solemn, warning is all of this for our hearts! How it shows us the wickedness of unbelief and the fearful fruits which that evil root produces. It is true that David had no reason to trust Saul, but he had every reason to continue trusting God. But alas, unbelief is the sin of all others which doth so easily beset us. It is inherent in our very nature and it is more impossible to root it out by any exertions of ours, than it is to change the features of our countenances. What need is there for us to cry daily, “Lord, I believe; help *thou* mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). Let me see in David myself, my very nothingness. O to fully realize that in our best moments we can never trust ourselves too little, nor God too much.

“And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath” (1Sa 27:2). Here we see David not only forsaking the path of duty, but joining interests with the enemies of God. This we must never do. No, not even for self-preservation or out of care for our family. As another has said, “It is in one sense, a very easy matter to get out of the place of trial, but then we get out of the place of blessing also.” Such is generally, if not always the case, with the children of God. No matter how sore the trial, how pressing our circumstances, or how acute our need, to “rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him” (Psa 37:7) is not only the course which most honours Him, but which, in the long run, spares us much great confusion and trouble which results when *we* seek to extricate ourselves.

“And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household” (1Sa 27:3). David’s circumstances upon entering into Gath this time were very different from what they had been on a previous occasion (1Sa 21:10-15). Then he entered secretly, now openly. Then as a person unknown, now as the recognized enemy of Israel’s king. Then alone, now with six hundred men. Then he was driven hence, now he probably had been invited thither. Apparently he met with a kindly reception—probably because the king of Gath now hoped to use him in his own service—either that he could employ David against Israel or secure an advantageous alliance with him, if ever he came to the throne. Thus the plan of David appeared to meet with success. At last he found a quiet dwelling-place. Providence seemed to be smiling upon him and none but an anointed eye could have discerned otherwise.

“And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal’s wife” (1Sa 27:3). Ah, has not the Holy Spirit supplied the key (in the second half of this verse) which explains to us David’s sad lapse. It was his “*two* wives,” which had displeased the Lord! We entitled the July article “David’s chastening” and sought to point out the connection between what is found at the end of 1 Samuel 25 and that which is recorded in 1 Samuel 26, namely, the renewed attack of Saul upon him. That divine “chastening” was now continued and may be discerned by the spiritual eye in a variety of details.

In this article, we have sought to show the awfulness of unbelief and the evil character of the fruits that issue from it, and how that the graces of the strongest Christian soon become feeble unless they are renewed by the Spirit. But let it now be pointed out that God does not act capriciously in this. If our graces be not renewed, the fault lies in ourselves. It is by working backward from effect to cause, that we may here learn the most important lesson of all. (1) David sinned grievously in seeking refuge among the enemies of the Lord. (2) He went to them without having sought divine guidance. (3) He leaned unto his own understanding and reasoned that it was best for him to go to Gath. (4) He acted thus because he had given way to unbelief. (5) He gave way to unbelief because his faith was not divinely renewed and prayer in him had been choked. (6) His faith was not renewed because *the Holy Spirit was grieved over his sin!* Re-read these six points in their inverse order!

## HEART WORK

### Part Four

We now resume at the point where we left off in our last article.

Second, it is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under affliction, to call to mind that our own *Father* has the ordering of them. Not a creature can move either hand or tongue against us, but by His permission. Suppose the cup be a bitter one which He has given thee to drink, still there is no poison in it. Hath not God said, “I will do you no hurt” (Jer 25:6)! If you be really one of His children thou liest too near Him to injure thee. Thy highest good is ever before Him and though He spares not the rod when we need it, yet it is *love* which wields it (Heb 12:6). Suppose a faithful and tender-hearted physician had studied well the case of a patient, and had prescribed the most excellent remedies to spare his life. Would he not be grieved to hear him cry out “You have poisoned me,” because it gripes and pains him in the operation? Quell then those groundless and unreasonable suspicions of the designs of the Great Physician.

Third, though God hath reserved unto Himself the right to afflict His people, yet He has pledged Himself not to take His lovingkindness from them: “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in My judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail” (Psa 89:30-33). Can I look that Scripture in the face with a murmuring or repining spirit? O naughty heart! doest thou well to be discontented when God hath given thee the whole tree, with all its clusters of comfort, because He suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves! Christians have both spiritual blessings and temporal mercies, the one abiding, the other movable—since God has eternally secured the former, never let thy heart be troubled at the loss of the latter.

Fourth, may it not be that by these humbling providences God is now accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited for? If so, is it not foolish to be worried over the same? You have asked Him to refine your soul, to conform you more unto the image of Christ, to deliver

you from the power of sin, to discover unto you the emptiness and insufficiency of the creature, to so mortify your worldly and fleshly lusts that you might find all your enjoyment and satisfaction in Christ. Then by these impoverishing strokes God is now fulfilling thy desires. Wouldst thou be delivered from temptation? then He has hedged up thy way with thorns. Wouldst thou see the vanity of the creature? He has now revealed it to thy experience. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? He has taken away the food and fuel that maintained them. As prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest in the bosom of God? He has pulled from under thy head the soft pillow of creature-delights on which before you rested!

Finally, if like Rebekah of old, thou still refusest to be comforted or quieted, then consider one thing more, which if it be seriously pondered will doubtless still thy soul. Compare the condition you are now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with that of the damned! Some of those you used to associate and make merry with are now wailing and gnashing their teeth under the scourge of divine vengeance. They are roaring amid the unquenchable flames of hell and deservedst not *thou* to be among them! O my friend, your present lot, no matter how unpleasant it be, cannot for a moment be compared with theirs. How gladly would they change places with you. Let the knowledge that your sins deserved eternal torment make you thank God heartily for a crust of bread and a cup of water.

3. *In times of public danger.* We do not wish to be an alarmist or needlessly excite the fear of our readers, but judging from God's ways in the past, it would seem quite likely that social upheavals, and the menacing of property and life, are not far distant. We say this, not merely because of the discontent which is now seething within the lower and rougher elements, nor because that tens of thousands, feeling so severely the pinch of poverty, are being driven to the point of desperation, but because so very few professing Christians have yet humbled themselves beneath the mighty hand of God and evidenced any godly sorrow for their past extravagances, or show any marked reformation in their lives today. One wonders how much distress and suffering it will take before the haughty are humbled, and before those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will give Him the place which is His right in their hearts and lives.

There can be no social revolution, no setting at defiance of established law and order, while the restraining hand of God curbs the wilder passions of men. The Almighty has perfect control of all His creatures and therefore His people are bidden to pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may *lead a quiet and peaceable life* in all godliness and honesty" (1Ti 2:2)—such a petition would be useless were not the helm of all events held by the hand of the Lord. And it is for the sake of His own elect that God prevents the reprobate from turning this world into bedlam and shambles. But if His own people have wandered so far from Him as not to have His ear, if they will not repent of and turn away from their wicked ways now that His chastening hand is lightly laid upon them, then He will most probably resort to far sterner measures and *force them to their knees*.

He who reads with any degree of attention the history of Israel, especially that portion of it recorded in the book of Judges, will see that God had to employ drastic means to turn them from their idols. So too he who has any fair acquaintance with the history of the "Christian" nations of Europe during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, will discover there several solemn illustrations of the same principle. And it seems to the writer that something more than an industrial depression, something more than financial straitness and flu epidemics, will be required to bring to an end the present frightful desecration of the Holy Sabbath, the brazen immodesty which stalks through the land, the spirit of lawlessness which abounds on every side. God may

soon unleash the hounds of anarchy! Suppose He does—that would be another critical hour wherein we would need to exercise special care over our hearts. “Hear for the time to come” (Isa 42:23)!

In times of danger and public distraction, the stoutest souls are apt to be surprised by slavish fear. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, and on earth distress of nations, with perplexity, then the hearts of men fail them for fear and the looking after those things which are coming on the earth (Luk 21:25-26). But it should not be thus with the saints. They ought to be of a more raised spirit. Those who are walking with God, may say “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. *Therefore will not we fear*, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled” (Psa 46:1-3). With David they will exclaim, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psa 27:1). How, then, may a Christian preserve his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great or threatening danger?

First, even then *all* creatures are in the directing hand of God and can only move as *He* permits them. Let this truth be well settled by faith in the heart and it will have a marvelous quieting effect upon it. A lion at large is a terrible creature to meet, but not so when he is in the keeper’s hand. Dreadful indeed will it be if a time of Bolshevism should break loose in this land, but even so He who rules heaven and earth shall say, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further” (Job 38:11). Even then, my brother or sister, God would still be your *Father* and much more tender toward you than you are unto yourself. Let me ask the most nervous woman whether there would not be a vast difference between a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian and the same sword in the hand of a loving husband? As great a difference is there in looking upon creatures by an eye of sense and looking on them as in the hand of your God by an eye of faith.

Second, urging upon yourself the express prohibitions of Christ in this case and let thy soul stand in awe of the violation of them. The Son of God has charged you, “When ye shall hear of wars *and commotions*, be not terrified” (Luk 21:9), then cry unto Him for supernatural grace to obey. “In nothing terrified by your adversaries” (Phi 1:28). Three times over in Matthew 10:26-31 Christ commands us *not to fear* “men.” Does the voice of a creature make thee tremble and shall not the voice of God. If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the plain commands of Christ? Surely *His* word should have more power to calm thee than the voice of a poor worm of the earth to terrify. “I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die?” (Isa 51:12).

Third, consult the many precious promises which are recorded for your support and comfort in all dangers. These are the refuges to which you may fly and be safe. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies. “Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psa 91:5-11). “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa 43:1-2).

Finally, make sure of the eternal interest of thy soul in the hands of Jesus Christ. When *that* is done, then you may say, Now world do thy worst. You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you know that it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do” (Luk 12:4). If you are truly and Scripturally assured that your spirit will be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation the moment of its dismissal from the body, trouble not yourself about the instruments and means of its dismissal. “O but a violent death is terrible to nature!” But what matter is it when thy soul is in heaven whether it be let out at thy mouth or thy throat? whether thy familiar friends or barbarous enemies close thy dead eyes? Thy soul in heaven shall not be conscious of how thy body is abused on earth.

Fourth, in times of Zion’s trouble it behooves public and tender hearts to be delivered from sinking into despondency and despair. When we see the once fair gardens of the Church, with their hedges broken down, the boar running wild therein, the flowers replaced by weeds, it makes a godly soul cry, “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears” (Jer 9:1). Yes, but remember, no trouble befalls Zion, but by the permission of Zion’s God and He permits nothing out of which He will not bring much good at last. Moreover, “There *must be* also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest” (1Co 11:19). Again, lay hold of and persistently plead before God His promise, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isa 59:19). However low the Church may be plunged under the waters of adversity, it shall assuredly rise again.

Fifth, how may a Christian keep his heart from *vengeful motives* under the greatest injuries and abuses of men? First, urge upon thy soul the express commands of God. Remember that this is forbidden fruit, no matter how pleasant to our vitiated appetites. Revenge is sweet, says nature. The effects thereof shall be bitter, says God. How plainly has God prohibited this flesh-pleasing sin, “Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work” (Pro 24:29). “Avenge not yourselves” (Rom 12:19). But that is not all, “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink” (Pro 25:21). One of the many proofs of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures is that they forbid revenge which is so sweet to nature. Then awe thy heart by the authority of God in those Scriptures.

Second, set before thy soul the blessed and binding example of Christ. Never did any suffer more and greater abuses from men than did the Saviour, and never was any one so peaceful and forgiving, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1Pe 2:23). To be of a meek and gracious spirit is to be Christ-like. Third, calm thy heart by the realization that by revenge thou dost but satisfy a lust, but by forgiving thou shalt conquer a lust. Again, consider more frequently how often you wrong God and then you will not be so easily enflamed against those who wrong thee. Do you still reply, But such insults and injustices are more than flesh and blood can stand? then earnestly seek *supernatural* grace.

Sixth, how may a Christian preserve his heart from utterly sinking in seasons of spiritual gloom and the hidings of God’s face? Turn unto the cheering promises which God has left on record for His backslidden people, Jeremiah 3:22, Hosea 14:4, etc. No matter what your sin or trouble be, let it drive you *to* God, and not from Him. Cry with David, “Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great” (Psa 25:11). But suppose I can obtain no access to God, no conscious help from His Spirit, and find no ray of hope for my poor heart? Then heed this word, “Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and *hath no light*? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God” (Isa 50:10).

Seventh, how may the Christian, in a time of critical illness, get his heart loose from all earthly engagements and *persuade it unto a willingness to die*? First, by reminding himself that death has lost its sting (1Co 15:55) and cannot harm him. Second, by considering what heavy burdens he will then be rid of. The soul pays a dear rent for the house it now lives in! But death frees the saint not only from all the troubles and trials of this life, not only from all the sufferings and pains of the body, but it delivers from all spiritual diseases, “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom 6:7). Justification destroys its damning power, sanctification its reigning power, but glorification its very being and existence. At death the Christian is done forever with Satan and his temptations. Then how heartily should he welcome it!

*(For much in this article we are indebted to the works of the Puritan, John Flavel, 1630-1691.)*

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 4. The Israel of God (Concluded)

(We feel that an apology is almost due some of our readers for continuing this present series at such length and of discussing each aspect of the subject in such detail, but we are constrained so to do, for the sake of another class who sorely need them. Please pray that it may please God to use these particular articles in dispersing the mists of error from many minds.)

We resume at the point where we left off in our last article. In Romans 9:6-7, the apostle enunciates a principle which it is highly important for us to heed. Failure to do so must only lead to a misunderstanding of the greater part of the Old Testament. That principle simply stated is, that God had an election *within* an election—that while the nation of Israel as such were His peculiar people, separated from all other nations and favoured with great privileges, yet only a predestinated remnant of them had been chosen unto salvation and ordained to spend eternity in heaven. Each member of that chosen remnant was, in God’s appointed time, regenerated and sanctified by the operations of the Holy Spirit, was endowed with a “new nature,” and spiritual faith. These, and these alone, were the real “children of promise,” and these were adumbrated by Isaac—born after Ishmael was set aside by God, born according to His promise, born by His miracle-working power.

This great fact was quite unknown unto the carnal Jews and hence we find them, at the beginning of the New Testament, hotly opposing the Gospel message. *They* were not “lost” sinners, “dead in trespasses,” needing to be born again. Why no (in their estimation), they were already the children of God, had Abraham to their father, and were “just persons, which need no repentance” (Luk 15:7). *Theirs* were the covenants, *theirs* were the promises, *theirs* was the Messiah. Consequently, when the Messiah did come and called upon them to “repent” (Mat 4:17), and presented Himself as the One who had come to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Luk 19:10), they despised and rejected Him and ultimately crucified Him as a blaspheming impostor.

It was *this* spirit which Paul had to contend with most of all when the Judaizers sought to corrupt his converts. Much in his epistles can only be rightly understood in the light of this fact.

In our last article, we pointed out how that when the apostle said, “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6), he meant, The entire posterity of Jacob are not commensurate with the real and spiritual “Israel.” Then he added, “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Rom 9:7). The great error of the carnal Jews was that they thought they were the children of God by virtue of their being the descendants of Abraham. But the grand promise given to Abraham was not made to all his progeny in general, but to himself and a particular “seed.” As the descendants of Abraham, they were all indeed in one sense the children of God, for He said to Pharaoh, with reference to them, “Let my *son* go” (Exo 4:23), “but the *natural* sonship was only a figure of the *spiritual* sonship of all believers of every nation” (Robert Haldane, 1764-1842).

The principle affirmed here by the apostle was no invention of his for the purpose of silencing his opponents, but was one which had been illustrated from the beginning of God’s dispensations in reference to the Abrahamic family—the principle of restricting promises, couched in general terms, to a particular class of those to whom they might seem to refer. In proof thereof the apostle quotes from the plain words of Jehovah to Abraham (recorded in Genesis 21:12), “In Isaac shall thy seed be called”—Ishmael was passed by, as were all the sons which he had later by Keturah. And it is very evident from Galatians 4:28 that Isaac, the child “of promise,” was a type of all the elect, redeemed, and regenerated people of God.

In these verses of Romans 9, the apostle was but amplifying and proving what he had declared earlier in the epistle, “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom 2:28-29). He who was a “Jew” *outwardly* was one that was such merely by name, nature, and nationality, but he who was a “Jew” *inwardly* was one that had been a subject of an internal work of grace. The one had the law of God in his hand, the other in his heart. The true and spiritual “Jew”—in contrast from those which are “Jews *by nature*” (Gal 2:15)—is one whose excellency is inward, seen and acknowledged by God alone.

A parallel passage to the one last before us is found in Philippians 3:3, “For *we* are *the circumcision*, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus.” What could possibly be plainer than this? and in the light of it who dares to deny that there *are* two kinds of “Israelites,” two kinds of “Jews,” two kinds of “circumcision,” a natural and a spiritual, and that in the New Testament the Holy Spirit Himself has appropriated and applied unto Christians the same names under which the saints were known by in Old Testament times. In the previous verse, the apostle had warned the Philippian saints against the Judaizers, “Beware of the concision,” a term which signifies “cutters off,” but Christians he designates, “the circumcision,” not because they were the lineal descendants of the patriarchs, but because by faith they enjoyed all the spiritual privileges of God’s ancient people.

Circumcision was the seal of the covenant of God. It was a mark of identification and the sign of separation. The spiritual import of circumcision was plainly taught in the Old Testament, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of *your heart*, and be no more stiffnecked” (Deu 10:16). “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God” (Deu 30:6). “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart” (Jer 4:4). By circumcision, the Jew professed to cut off from his heart every carnal thought and affection, in order that henceforth he might serve God in spirit and in truth, devoting himself



to Him alone, putting all his trust in Him. The same is true of the real Christian, see Galatians 5:24, Colossians 2:11.

The circumcising of the Jewish babe on the eighth day foreshadowed the dedicating of himself to God of the babe in Christ. It also signified the removal of our natural hardness of heart, the iniquity of it (by the Spirit's conviction) being laid open to our view, which is accompanied by pain or contrition for sin and shame because of it. Thus, when the apostle affirms of Christians, "We are the circumcision" he means *we* have the spiritual substance and reality of which the fleshly Israel had only the name and sign, just as when the Lord Jesus said, "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mat 12:50). He signified that He holds them in that relationship, He loves them, and feels for them.

"One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel" (Isa 44:5). Here is a remarkable prophecy which announced centuries beforehand the very thing for which we are contending in this article, namely that the New Testament saints should be known by *the same names* as were the Old Testament believers. Since it is highly probable that the attention of very few of our readers has ever been seriously directed unto this passage, let us take a closer, though brief, look at the same.

The above prophecy begins at verse 1 of Isaiah 44 and is addressed unto that remnant from among the Jews which is "according to the election of grace," (Rom 11:5) to a spiritual "Israel" among the nation of Israel. To that favoured remnant the Lord promises an effusion or outpouring of His Spirit, see Isaiah 44 verse 3. Note very carefully that the figurative expressions which are found in the first half of that verse are definitely explained in the second half—this supplies a most valuable key to the understanding of many passages in the prophets, wherein God promises to give "water" etc., but which the gross materialists of our day carnalize, instead of viewing spiritually. Then in verse 4, we are shown the blessed effects of this outpouring of the Spirit which occurred on the day of Pentecost. Verse 5 gives us the success of the apostolic ministry among the Gentiles, who were not called by the name Israel, but who would now reckon themselves of the posterity of Jacob in a *spiritual* sense and Israelites "indeed"!

"Doubtless it looks farther yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles and the multitudes of them which, upon the effusion of the Spirit after Christ's ascension, should be joined to the Lord and added to the Church. These converts are 'one and another'—very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God, Colossians 3:11. When one doth it, another shall, by his example, be invited to do it, and then another. First, they shall resign themselves to God. Not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, 'I am the Lord's.' He has an incontestable right to rule me and I submit to Him, to all His commands, to all His disposals. I am and will be His only, His wholly, His forever. Second, they shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, 'call themselves by the name of Jacob,' forgetting their own people and their father's house, and desirous to wear the character and the livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, etc. Third, they shall do this very solemnly, they 'shall subscribe with their hand unto the Lord,' as for the confirming of a bargain a man sets his hand to it and delivers it as his act and deed" (Matthew Henry).

Another Old Testament prophecy which announced the same blessed truth is found in Jeremiah 31:31, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." The "days come" refer to the Christian dispensation, as is unequivocally established by the apostle's application of this passage in

Hebrews 8:8-12. The “new covenant” (cf. Luk 22:20, 2Co 3:6) is in contrast from the Mosaic covenant. The houses of Israel and Judah are to be understood mystically, as including all who are “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19), the middle wall of partition being broken down. “Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made—‘the house of Israel and Judah,’ that is, *with the Gospel church*, the Israel of God, on which peace shall rest (Gal 6:16), with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them. So Jews and Gentiles are one in the Gospel church and covenant” (Matthew Henry).

Still another Old Testament prophecy announcing the same thing is found in Hosea 1:10, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.” How many have been taught (the writer included) that this has reference to God’s future dealings with carnal Israel, but the New Testament makes it unmistakably plain that it is God’s elect *among the Gentiles*, those belonging to the spiritual “Israel,” who are here in view. In Romans 9:24, Paul says, “Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles,” which he proves with, “As he saith also in Osee, [Hosea] I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God” (Rom 9:25-26). “It is certain that this promise (Hos 1:10) had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it, for to this these words are applied by Paul and Peter (1Pe 2:10). ‘Israel’ here is *the Gospel church*, the spiritual Israel” (Matthew Henry).

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1Pe 2:9-10). It is of great importance that we should recognize that the Old Testament abounds in *typical* promises and prophecies. The various appellations which are here given to Christians are borrowed from the descriptive names used of the nation of Israel under a former dispensation, and belong to the people of God under a new economy, in a far higher sense and with a much deeper meaning than they had of old. The New Testament church is the *antitype* of Israel at Sinai. The language of 1 Peter 2:10 was another reference to Hosea 1:10. Carnal Israel having proved unfaithful, all its spiritual privileges have been transferred to the New Testament church: *see* Matthew 21:43!

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this” (Amo 9:11-12). We are not left to guess at the meaning of this prophecy, for its terms are infallibly explained to us in the New Testament. After Peter had related to the church at Jerusalem how that the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the household of Cornelius, James affirmed, “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit *the Gentiles*, to take out of them a people for His name. *And to this agree* the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things” (Act 15:14-17).

“David’s tabernacle was to be rebuilt, and his kingdom restored by the Messiah, but in a *spiritual* way, for the ‘tabernacle of David’ designs the spiritual kingdom or church of Christ....‘And I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up,’ which has been done by breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and letting in the latter into the Gospel church with the former....‘That the residue of men might seek after the Lord,’ the Builder and Proprietor of this tabernacle, and who dwells in it; that is, attend His worship, pray unto Him, and seek unto Him for life and salvation. In Amos those are called ‘the remnant of Edom,’ and design the remnant according to the election of grace among the Gentiles—the Jews generally call all other nations, and especially the Roman empire, Edom” (John Gill, 1697-1771).

We trust sufficient has now been said to convince every candid reader that the name “Israel” is often used in the Old Testament in a *mystical* sense, as well as a literal, and that there are *spiritual* “Jews” as well as carnal ones. When the Lord said to the woman *of Canaan* (testing her faith), “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mat 15:24), He certainly did not mean that He had been sent only unto the fleshly descendants of Jacob, for unto some *of them* He said, “But ye believe not, because *ye* are *not* of my *sheep*” (Joh 10:26). No, it was unto the lost sheep of the mystical or spiritual “house of Israel” that He was sent. The *spiritual* “Israel” is also in view in such passages as John 1:31; Acts 5:31; 13:23; 28:20, namely that “Israel” whom the Father elected, the Son redeemed, and the Spirit regenerates. O what praise is due unto His sovereign grace, if writer and reader belong to “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16).

## HEARING THE ROD

### Micah 6:9

“Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). How can it be otherwise, living as he is in a world which is under the curse that Adam’s sin entailed and what is worse, under God’s judgment because of its casting out of His beloved Son. Yet the subject of “trouble” needs to be “rightly divided” if we are to properly heed that exhortation, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but *understanding* what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17), an important part of which consists in understanding the meaning and message of our Father to us in all the “trouble” which we encounter and experience.

As we turn to the Holy Scriptures for light upon this subject of trouble, suffering, affliction, tribulation, persecution, etc., we discover two distinct and different lines of truth thereon, running all through the Word. On the one hand, we read that, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22), parallel with which are such passages as Luke 6:26, 2 Timothy 3:12, etc. But on the other hand, we read that “The curse causeless shall not come (Pro 26:2), that God does not “afflict willingly” (Lam 3:33), and that “if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1Co 11:31). Much of the “trouble” and “affliction” experienced by us, we bring upon ourselves, through our own folly. We see this plainly exemplified in the natural realm.

How many are now suffering bodily ills through intemperate eating and drinking. How many are nervous wrecks as the result of “burning the candle at both ends”?

The same principle holds good in the spiritual realm. The chastening rod of God is upon many of His children because of their self-will and self-pleasing. Some of them are passing through sore financial straits because their “sins have *withholden*” God’s temporal mercies (Jer 5:25). Still others, who have been favoured with clear and definite light from God as to a certain course of duty—e.g. separating themselves from religious associations which dishonour Christ—and because they have not *walked* therein, the Lord has “hedged up their way with *thorns*” (See Hos 2:6). Nevertheless, it would be a serious mistake to draw the inference that every time we see a suffering Christian, we behold one who has seriously displeased God and therefore is now being severely chastised by Him. It would be wrong to form such a conclusion concerning *every* case, because trouble and suffering issue from *other* causes and are sent by God for other purposes than the reproof of sin—sent sometimes to experimentally fit the recipient for greater and higher usefulness in the service of Christ. Compare 2 Corinthians 1:4.

Now from what has been pointed out above, it should be quite clear that real exercise of heart is called for from each one of us whenever painful trials come upon us. That we need to get down before God and cry, “*Show* me wherefore thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2). To take *this* attitude is the part of wisdom, for *if* God be dealing with us over something that has displeased Him, and we fail to humble ourselves before Him and learn of Him *what* it is which is now choking the channel of His highest blessings toward us, and obtain grace from Him to put right what is wrong, then the chastening “profits” us not, and further and increased chastisement must be our portion. For it is not until we are “*exercised* thereby,” exercised *in conscience*, that we have any promise it *will* issue in “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11).

*If* the “trouble” through which we are passing at any period of our lives *be* a reproof from God because of our sins or unfaithfulness, and instead of *suspecting* that He *is* displeased with us and taking our place in the dust before Him, begging Him to put His finger on the festering sore in our hearts, if instead, we proudly imagine that there is *nothing* wrong in our lives, that we have given God no cause to smite us, and complacently assume that we are suffering *only* for “righteousness’ sake,” and draw comfort from such promises as Matthew 5:11-12, we are deceived by Satan and are but “*forsaking* our own mercy” (See Jon 2:8). It is written, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Pro 28:13). Thus, whenever “trouble” comes upon a Christian, it is *always* the safest policy to come to the Lord and say, “Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24).

From what has been said above, it will be seen that it often falls to the lot of God’s servants to perform a duty which is most unpleasant to the flesh. When they come into contact with a brother or sister who is passing through deep waters, their *natural* desire is to administer *comfort*, but in some instances (at least) to do so would be guilty of “healing also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly” and *how* is this done? The same verse tells us, by “saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer 6:14). That was what the “*false* prophets” had done to Israel and *that* was the very thing which carnal Israel desired. Their demand was, “Prophecy *not* unto us right things, speak unto us *smooth* things, prophesy deceits” (Isa 30:10), and human nature has not changed since then!

It is the thankless task for any true servant of Christ today to be *faithful* to his Master and faithful to the souls of those with whom he deals. Not that God requires him to think the *worst* of every case that comes to his notice, but that it is his bounden duty to exhort each one to act on Job 10:2. But if he does do so, he may be assured at the beginning, that in the majority of cases, he

will be looked upon as harsh, hypercritical, unkind, like one of Job's censorious comforters. For there are few indeed who have an *honest* heart and are ready to know the worst about themselves, and are willing to be cut by the knife of God's Word. The great majority want *only* comfort, the "promises" of Scripture, the message of "Peace, peace."

But do not the promises of God belong unto His children? Certainly they do, but here too, "There is a season, and a time to every purpose" (Ecc 3:1). There is a time when we may *rightfully* draw consolation and strength from the promises, and there is a time when we may *not* legitimately do so. When all is right between our souls and God, when every known sin has been confessed, *and* forsaken in sincere purpose of heart, then may we righteously draw milk from the breasts of divine consolation. But just as there are times when it would be injurious for us to eat some of the things we do when we are well, so to take unto ourselves comfort from the divine promises, while sin is cherished in our hearts, is baneful and sinful.

The above (now slightly revised) was recently sent by us in a letter to one passing through deep waters. It occurred to us that it might be a timely word for others. Many are now in the fiery furnace and few indeed are there capable of speaking to them a word in season. It is not sufficient to bid them, "Trust in God," and assure them that brighter days are ahead. The *conscience* needs to be searched. The wound must be probed and cleansed before it is ready for the "balm of Gilead." We must *humble ourselves* "under the mighty hand of God" (1Pe 5:6), if we are to be exalted again by Him in "due time." May the Lord be pleased to bless the above unto some of "his own"—correspondence on spiritual matters welcome.

## DELUSIONS DISCOVERED

To the editors of the Gospel Standard: If you will bear with me, I will write a few of the feelings that have passed, from time to time, in my soul and some little account of the way in which I hope the Lord has led me.

From a child, I seemed to have some kind of fear of God, so that I could not follow sin and wickedness as others in external acts, and I was obliged to keep away from ungodly characters. Being a teacher in the Church of England school, I was obliged to teach the children the awful lies in their Catechism. Here I continued for some years, attending the church, and passing, in the eyes of many, for a Christian. I went amongst the Independents a little while and was a strict hearer there. I was noticed by many of them as a very pious young man and a child of God. Thus I heard their preachers and thought them all dear men of God.

Hearing my mother, who is, I believe a gracious woman, converse with two of my sisters about the things of God, hearing her tell of her experience, how she had been bound down under the curse of the law for twelve years, expecting nothing but hell; how she had envied the very beasts of the field, because they had no soul to appear before God; how she had gone to bed, many times, afraid to shut her eyes in sleep lest she should awake in hell; and how the Lord had appeared to her and washed away all her sins, by a blessed manifestation of pardon through the blood and righteousness of Christ made known to her soul; and hearing, also, a blessed account of

the way in which the Lord led some of my sisters, I began to see that I knew nothing about real religion and that the parson of the parish church bore no marks of a man of God, nor could I find any of the Church people, nor scarcely any among the Independents, or any of their preachers near me, that could give an account of the real work of grace in their souls.

I afterwards attended a little chapel in the town, though the people who attended it were hated by the mere professors of religion. My mother being a member there, I became a constant hearer. The men who preached there appeared to me to be wonderful men. They preached eternal election, particular redemption, that salvation was all of grace, and that none could be saved but those that were everlastingly chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. I felt a great pleasure in hearing these men, as they preached doctrinal truths very clearly from the letter of the Word, and much of the bright side of the experience of a child of God, and I was often melted down into tears under their preaching. I now became very zealous for the truth and could read my Bible from morning till night, and thought that I had a great insight into the truth. I thought that I must be a child of God, because I was such a constant hearer of the Word preached and had, as I thought, such wonderful zeal for God and for His truth, and lived such a good life that no one could bring anything against my character. I continued for some time in this state and passed, in the eyes of some of the children of God, as one that was born of God. I still increased in zeal and head-knowledge, until I thought myself almost fit to stand up in a pulpit.

Soon after this, it pleased the Lord to raise up a faithful servant and send him amongst us. I heard J.W., a real heart-searching minister. He began to pull down my false hopes and counterfeit religion, and drew a line of distinction, not only between the sheep and the goats, but a searching separation between a Calvinistic sheep and a Calvinistic goat, and opened up the delusions of the day. He said that a man may know all the doctrines of the Bible and have a wonderful insight into them, so that he may preach and explain them very clearly from the letter of the Word, yet never have a spark of grace in his soul; and that whatever a man's religion was, if he had never been brought down under the mighty hand of God, and never had the law of God applied, more or less, with a supernatural power, to his conscience, nor had all his false hopes and false religion burned up and destroyed, nor been brought down a ruined wretch to the feet of Jesus, with groans, sighs, cries, and tears for a manifestation of pardon through the precious atoning blood of Christ made known to his soul by an inward experience, he will be lost to all eternity.

Hearing such things as these, Lord's day after Lord's day, for some time, I began to see and feel things very differently from what I ever did before. I saw that I had never stepped one step in the path of life; that I had never possessed one grain of grace in my soul; that I had made lies my refuge, hid myself under false pretenses, and made an agreement with death, and a covenant with hell; that I knew nothing of the law, nor of the Gospel; that I had never been killed nor made alive, wounded nor healed, stripped nor clothed, made poor nor made rich; that I had never been brought down nor raised up; that I had a name to live, while my soul was dead before God, dead in sins, dead in a profession, and dead under the curse of God's righteous law; yet knew it not, being blindfolded by the devil, and led captive at his will in a graceless profession. I saw that free will was no more than a spider's web to rest my never-dying soul upon and that doctrines in the head, without grace, were no better. I saw that all my reading of the Bible and various religious books, all my attendance at places of worship from a child, all my zeal and head-knowledge, and all my prayers, were nothing but a mass of hypocrisy, deceit, and self-righteousness. I saw that there were thousands in hell that had gone as far as I had in a profession of religion and yet had died under the wrath of God. O how my soul went out after God in sighs, and groans, and wrestlings, that He would show mercy to such a wretch as I!

I saw that the Lord would be just if He cut me off and sent me to hell. And O how my very soul hated hypocrisy and the delusions of my past life! I many times begged the Lord to drag me, in my feelings, through the very belly of hell, rather than let me live and die a hypocrite. O how my soul went out after the Lord in longing desires that He would appear as my God; that He would show mercy unto one so vile; and that He would lead me to Gethsemane, there to see, by precious faith, a slaughtered Jesus, bleeding for my transgressions and dying that I might live, and that by His death, I might have everlasting life beyond the grave. O that the Lord would apply these things to my conscience! O for one spark of divine life in my soul! O for one grain of precious faith! O for one drop of atoning blood and an interest in the justifying righteousness of Christ! I saw that the commandment was exceedingly broad and that I should soon enter the woeful abode of endless night, unless I were saved by the matchless grace of God, and a salvation brought home, applied, and made known to my soul by His mighty power. All my false hopes of heaven, all my fleshly zeal, all my counterfeit faith, and all my head-knowledge of the Word of God appeared to be nothing but delusion; and I felt myself, in some little measure, in my real state, a lost, ruined, perishing sinner, without hope and without help in myself, and a poor, naked, needy, guilty, bankrupt beggar, and that I must forever lie in hell, under the wrath of a just God, unless I have an experimental knowledge of my eternal election and interest in the person, life, and death of Christ, so that my soul may not be found naked at the great and awful day.

I feel assured that Christ died for all the elect and no others; but this will not satisfy my soul. I want a personal knowledge that *I* am one of the elect brought home to my soul with a living power, that I may know that I am born again of the blessed Spirit, by having His kingdom set up in my heart, so as to feel assured that He is my Lord and my God, and my everlasting portion beyond the grave. O Thou great, unchangeable God, when wilt Thou arise and shine into my soul, and bless me with this sweet hope in Thy mercy, that I may feel the precious atoning blood of Christ applied unto me? This is what my soul wants; this is what it longs for.

Sometimes I have felt my soul sweetly drawn out after the Lord, under the preaching of the Word, when the servant of the Lord has been led by the blessed Spirit to trace out the feelings of the poor, the outcast, the desolate, the needy, the hopeless, and the helpless in themselves; and I have gone into the fields, under the ricks of corn, and over the hills to some lonesome downs, where no human eye could see me, nor ear hear me, and poured out my soul unto the Lord, with cries and tears, that He would reveal Himself to my soul, and show me His dear hands, and feet, and side, that I might say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," (Joh 20:28). and that He would say unto me, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." I exclaimed, "This is what I want. Do not be angry, but grant me my petition, O Lord! I feel that I shall be lost forever, unless I am saved in Thee with an everlasting salvation. I deserve not the least of all Thy mercies. I deserve nothing but hell and canst Thou, wilt Thou have mercy on such a wretch?" Thus I have in tears poured out the feelings of my soul unto the Lord, until my poor body has been wearied with the exercise of my soul, yet I have felt some sweetness in pouring out my soul unto Him, and have returned home with a "who can tell but the Lord may yet appear, and bless me with the pardon of all my sins?"

No preaching will do for me now, but such as is sound, searching, and experimental, and brought home with power to my soul. Christ in the letter, and a letter religion, will not do for me now. My soul seeks for realities, power, life, and feeling. Salvation felt, handled, and tasted in my soul is what I long to experience. Many times have I cried out in the language of David, "Search me, O God! and try me." I have asked the Lord to see whether I have any evil end in view and supplicated Him to lead me in the way everlasting. I have begged Him to bring me to the light

and show unto me my real character and the very ground of my heart, that I might never be resting in a false hope, and never be building on a false foundation, but that I might be sifted and driven out of every refuge of lies, and be brought to the light, that I might have my real state opened to my view as I stand before God. O how I could bless and praise the matchless name of the Lord, that He hath not cut me off whilst I was a stranger to Him, in an ungodly profession, but that He had, in some little measure, opened my eyes to see and my heart to feel the awful state in which I was!

Since I have felt these things, a secret hope sometimes rises up in my mind, that had the blessed Lord meant to destroy me, He would not have shown me those things; that He would not have implanted His fear in my soul, (as I hope He has), nor have brought me to see and feel all my righteousness, all my good works, and all my bad works, to be as filthy rags; and that He would not have caused me to groan and pant, long and sigh for the precious imputed righteousness and atoning blood of Christ to be applied to my soul. I have seen that all real religion was supernatural and came from God, and from God alone; and that unless I had this real, vital religion brought with supernatural power into my conscience, and experimentally enjoyed the pardon of all my sins, by an internal manifestation of the precious blood and righteousness of Christ by the Holy Spirit, I rested in a refuge of lies. O how my soul did long and pant after these things to be experimentally felt in my heart! What desire I have felt towards the blessed Redeemer! I have felt that I could leave father and mother, house and land, gold and silver, anything and everything that this world calls good or great. I felt that I could leave all for Christ's sake and die for His honour and glory, would He but manifest Himself to me.

Some times on a Lord's day, the faithful servant of God has entered into the feeling of my soul in such a manner that I have been constrained to bless and praise the name of the Lord for sending such a one amongst us. One whose face was set as a flint, and who stood as an iron pillar and as a brazen wall against the deceitful religion of the day. One that has been led into the everlasting distinction between the elect and the reprobate. One that has separated the precious from the vile, cast up the high-way, and lifted up a standard to the people. One that had been experimentally led into the footsteps of the flock and experimentally traced out the experience of gracious souls, and one that had been led into the deep things of God and deep soul-trouble that he might bring out the poor dear children of God, and speak of the path as he experimentally passed through it. While he was speaking from these words, "For in a time accepted have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I succoured thee: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation," O the wonderful things that he was enabled to bring out of them, as the mouth of God to my soul! As soon as he began to preach, the words dropped into my soul, melted my hard heart, crumbled me into nothing, and laid me in the dust. All my fears were gone and a sweet hope sprang up in my soul. O the beauty, power, life, and feeling that seemed to clothe the words which dropped from his lips! My soul was, as it were, melted with love to the ever-blessed Jehovah, and to the minister as His servant. I felt a sweet calm in my soul for some time. How worthless were the things of this world to me! I felt that I could leave it and ten thousand other worlds for the name and sake of a precious Christ. But these feelings did not last long and "I to my own sad state returned." Yet I sometimes feel encouraged under the ministry of the Word and sweet nearness to the Lord in my daily walks, and whilst working in the fields.

O with what weight have these things lain at times on my mind, when I have looked around me, and have seen flocks of goats, wolves, and hypocrites, flocking backwards and forwards to and from the Popish churches and chapels, with merry and cheerful countenances! I cannot describe with my pen what I have often felt for them. They have caused me many gloomy



moments. I feel assured that all the elect of God would be brought out from amongst them and be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, before they close their eyes in death, but when I have heard of professor after professor dropping out of time into eternity, without the least shadow of a true Gospel hope, I have had many searchings of heart and humbling of soul, and cries unto the Lord that He would lead me into that blessed path which leads to heaven.

But, to conclude. There is still wanting in my soul the witness of the blessed Spirit, witnessing to my spirit the full assurance of the pardon of my sins, so as to give me full satisfaction. This is what I have long sought after with many cries and tears unto the Lord, but I find that by all my wrestlings, strugglings, and cries, I cannot put myself amongst the *manifested* children of God, for I have no power nor might, nor spiritual strength of my own. I am a poor, vile, hell-deserving wretch, and daily feel the evil workings of my base heart and the awful abominations which are done in the land of my soul. *A Lover of the Truth, 1843.*

## CREDULOUS SIMPLETONS

“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro 14:15). As we all know, there is a class of people who are so gullible that they believe almost everything they hear, every story that is told, every promise that is made them. They are easily imposed upon, for they do not think for themselves and never properly outgrow their infancy. Thoroughly unsophisticated, they are ready victims for any retailers of fairy-tales who come along. But there is another class which, concerning natural things, are more cautious and on their guard. Who instead of crediting every tale, require proof, and who instead of forming estimates by the first glance of the eye, examine things carefully.

This second class to which reference has just been made is, in the affairs of the world, particular, shrewd, not easily imposed upon. We say “in the affairs of the world,” for when it comes to things concerning their eternal destiny, many of this very class are, strange to say, most credulous and easily duped. In matters concerning their never-dying souls, they throw caution to the winds, stifle any suspicions they might have, cease to examine things with due care, and allow themselves to be deceived. Let a man styling himself an “evangelist” come to their community and they will flock to hear him. Let him affirm that he believes the Bible to be God’s word, Christ to be God’s Son, and faith in His blood to be God’s way of salvation, and he is at once received as “orthodox.”

Satisfied thus of the “evangelist’s” orthodoxy, they are as ready to receive what he presents, as the poor heathen are to blindly follow what their “priests” tell them. Or, just as those born in Papist families pliantly yield unto the awful dogma that the Virgin Mary is to be worshipped, so others reared by those belonging to a Protestant denomination which teach that water baptism is requisite in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins, mechanically assent thereto. In like manner, if others sit under a preacher who tells them, “All that is necessary in order to salvation is to believe in Christ,” thousands of credulous simpletons believe *him*, to their eternal undoing. Yea, we greatly fear that not a few readers of this magazine, if they received a letter from the editor

addressing them as “Dear Brother” or “Dear Sister,” would be likely to exclaim, “Well, if Brother Pink thinks I am a Christian, there is no need for me to worry about it.” Yes, “the simple believeth every word.”

There is no doubt in the writer’s mind that one of the factors contributing much unto the babel of tongues now existing in Christendom is the gullibility of the public. Almost any man (or woman) can start a new religion today, providing he has a pleasing personality, a forceful delivery, or a sensational message, he is sure of a following. Again, the conflicting sects already in existence are perpetuated because so many of their adherents blindly accept some man’s say so, believing *their* “church’s” interpretation of the Scriptures, instead of prayerfully searching the Word for themselves. Here too we have the explanation of why so many are in a state of mental confusion, knowing not “whom to believe” or “what to believe.” They hear one preacher after another, attend this Bible conference and that, read numerous magazines and books, and finding the speakers and writers differing so much, these credulous simpletons know not where they stand.

Now this feverish rushing around from “church” to “church,” this readiness to accept almost anything that is heard or read, this lightness of belief, is a most dangerous thing. God has bidden His people to, “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because *many* false prophets are gone out into the world” (1Jo 4:1), and “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21). O how great is the need for so doing. Never more requisite and urgent than in these evil days. How often does that warning occur in the New Testament, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Mat 24:4; Eph 5:6; 1Jo 3:7, etc.) To take things on trust is the height of folly. Emulate those spoken of in Acts. 17:11, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things *were* so.”

“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro 14:15). Not only does he measure what he hears and reads by the unerring standard of God’s Word, but the prudent man also scrutinizes *his own heart*, to see if he can find there the evidences and fruits of regeneration and sanctification. He wishes to make sure that the Holy Spirit has wrought a miracle of grace within him. Deeply impressed with the solemnity of eternity, knowing how prone man is to give himself the benefit of the doubt, he dares not to take anything for granted, he cries, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2).

“The prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro 14:15). Yes, he takes warning from the empty profession all around him and is fearful lest *he* should prove to be one of the foolish virgins. He refuses to be beguiled by the voice of flatters, who tell him that all is well with his soul. Even though a preacher assures him that he is saved, *that* satisfies him not. He demands something more than a head-knowledge of the letter of Scripture. He wants to know that the law of God has been written on his heart (Heb 8:10). And in seeking proof of this he spares no pains and considers no diligence or effort too great.

“The prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro 14:15). Observe well the tense of the verb. It is not that he is concerned about the matter and then takes stock once and for all. No, he *continues* to be exercised before God as to the state of his soul. The “simple” may rest satisfied with the fact that they “believed on Christ” so many years ago, but the “prudent” are tender about their *present* relation to God. They realize that nothing but an obedient following of Christ now, a walking with Him now, a communing with Him now, furnishes any satisfactory proof that they were born-again at a certain date in the past.

“The prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro 14:15). Yes, he not only examines diligently his heart, but he is deeply concerned about his “way.” Instead of complacently assuming that the warning belongs unto others, *he* is filled with alarm when he reads that, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Pro 14:12). Is it possible that, after all, *he* may be deceived? Yes, very, very possible—yea, exceedingly likely. Such a soul, truly awakened by the Holy Spirit, can have no rest till he makes sure that he is in that “*narrow way*” which leadeth unto life and which FEW indeed find. Reader, which are you? A credulous simpleton or a prudent soul that “looketh *well*” to your going? If the former, may it please the Lord to shatter your false peace and make you feel your imminent danger. If the latter, may the Holy Spirit grant increasing diligence to “make your calling and election *sure*” (2Pe 1:10).

# November

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 11. The Advent of the Spirit (Part 3)

“There are few incidents more illuminating than that recorded in ‘the last day of the feast’ in John 7:37-39. The feast was that of Tabernacles. The feast proper lasted seven days, during which all Israel dwelt in booths. Special sacrifices were offered and special rites observed. Every morning one of the priests brought water from the pool of Siloam, and amidst the sounding of trumpets and other demonstrations of joy, the water was poured upon the altar. The rite was a celebration and a prophecy. It commemorated the miraculous supply of water in the wilderness and it bore witness to the expectation of the coming of the Spirit. On the seventh day the ceremony of the poured water ceased, but the eighth was a day of holy convocation, the greatest day of all.

“On that day there was no water poured on the altar and it was on the waterless day that Jesus stood on the spot and cried, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.’ Then He added those words, ‘He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water’ (Joh 7:38). The apostle adds the interpretative comment, ‘But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.’ ‘As the scripture hath said.’ There is no such passage in the Scripture as that quoted, but the prophetic part of the water ceremony was based upon certain Old Testament symbols and prophecies in which water flowed forth from Zion to cleanse, renew, and fructify the world. A study of Joel 3:18 and Ezekiel 47 will supply the key to the meaning both of the rite and our Lord’s promise. The Holy Spirit was ‘not yet given,’ but He was promised and His coming should be from the place of blood, the altar of sacrifice. Calvary opened the fountain from which was poured forth the blessing of Pentecost.” (Samuel Chadwick, 1860-1932).

In our last article, we considered *the meaning* of the Spirit’s descent and pointed out that it was the fulfillment of divine promise, the accomplishment of Old Testament types, and the beginning of a new dispensation. It was also *the grace of God flowing forth unto the Gentiles*. But first let us observe and admire the marvelous grace of God extended unto the Jews themselves. In His charge unto the apostles, the Lord Jesus gave orders that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*” (Luk 24:47), not

because the Jews had any longer a covenant standing before God—for the nation was abandoned by Him before the crucifixion—see Matthew 21:43—but in order to display His matchless mercy and sovereign benignity. Accordingly, in the Acts we see His love shining forth in the midst of the rebellious city. In the very place where the Lord Jesus had been slain, the full Gospel was now preached and three thousand were quickened by the Holy Spirit.

But the Gospel was to be restricted to the Jews no longer. Though the apostles were to commence their testimony in Jerusalem, yet Christ's glorious and all-efficacious Name was to be proclaimed "among all nations." The earnest of this was given when "devout men, out of every nation under heaven" (Act 2:5) exclaimed, "And how hear we every man in our own tongue?" (Act 2:8). It was an entirely new thing. Until this time, God had used Hebrew or a modification of it. Thus Bullinger's view that a new "Jewish" dispensation (the "Pentecostal") was then inaugurated is divinely set aside. What occurred in Acts 2 was a part reversal and in blessed contrast from what is recorded in Genesis 11. There we find "the tongues were divided to destroy an *evil* unity, and to show God's holy hatred of Babylon's iniquity. In Acts 2, we have grace at Jerusalem and a new and precious unity, suggestive of another building (Mat 16:18), with living *stones*—contrast the 'bricks' of Genesis 11:3 and its tower" (Percy W. Heward, 1882-1948). In Genesis 11 the dividing of tongues was *in judgment*. In Acts 2, the cloven tongues were *in grace* and in Revelation 7:9-10, we see men of all tongues *in glory*.

We next consider *the purpose* of the Spirit's descent. 1. *To witness unto Christ's exaltation.* Pentecost was God's seal upon the Messiahship of Jesus. In proof of His pleasure in and acceptance of the sacrificial work of His Son, God raised Him from the dead, exalted Him to His own right hand, and gave Him the Spirit to bestow upon His church (Act 2:33). It has been beautifully pointed out by another that, on the hem of the ephod worn by the high priest of Israel were golden bells and pomegranates (Exo 28:33-34). The sound of the bells (and that which gave them sound was their *tongues*) furnished evidence that he was alive while serving in the sanctuary. The high priest was a type of Christ (Heb 8:1); the holy place was a figure of heaven (Heb 9:24); the "sound from heaven" and the speaking "in tongues" (Act 2:2, 4) were a witness that our Lord was alive in heaven, ministering there as the High Priest of His people.

2. *To take Christ's place.* This is clear from His own words to the apostles, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (Joh 14:16). Until then, Christ had been their "Comforter," but He was soon to return to heaven. Nevertheless, as He went on to assure them, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you" (marginal rendering of Joh 14:18). He did "come" to them corporately after His resurrection, but He "came" to them spiritually and abidingly in the person of His deputy on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit, then, fills the place on earth of our absent Lord in heaven, with this additional advantage, that during the days of His flesh the Saviour's body confined Him unto one location, whereas the Holy Spirit—not having assumed a body as the mode of His incarnation—is equally and everywhere resident in and abiding with every believer.

3. *To further Christ's cause.* This is plain from His declaration concerning the Comforter, "He shall glorify me" (Joh 16:14). The word "Paraclete" (translated "Comforter" all through the Gospel) is also rendered "Advocate" in 1 John 2:1, and an "advocate" is one who appears as *the representative* of another. The Holy Spirit is here to interpret and vindicate Christ, to administer for Christ in His church and kingdom. He is here to accomplish His redeeming purpose in the world. He fills the mystical Body of Christ, directing its movements, controlling its members, inspiring its wisdom, supplying its strength. The Holy Spirit becomes to the believer individually and the church collectively all that Christ would have been had He remained on earth. Moreover,

He seeks out each one of those for whom Christ died, quickens them into newness of life, convicts them of sin, gives them faith to lay hold of Christ, and causes them to grow in grace and become fruitful.

It is important to see that the mission of the Spirit is for the purpose of continuing and completing that of Christ's. The Lord Jesus declared, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luk 12:49-50). The preaching of the Gospel was to be like "fire on the earth," giving light and warmth to human hearts. It was "kindled" then, but would spread much more rapidly later. Until His death Christ was "straitened." It did not consist with God's purpose for the Gospel to be preached more openly and extensively, but after Christ's resurrection, it went forth unto all nations. Following the ascension, Christ was no longer "straitened" and the Spirit was poured forth in the plenitude of His power.

4. *To endue Christ's servants.* "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," (Luk 24:49) had been the word of Christ to His apostles. Sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master. *He* had waited, waited till He was thirty, ere He was "anointed to preach good tidings" (Isa 61:1). The servant is not above his Lord. If He was indebted to the Spirit for the power of His ministry, the apostles must not attempt their work without the Spirit's unction. Accordingly they waited and the Spirit came upon them. All was changed. Boldness supplanted fear, strength came instead of weakness, ignorance gave place to wisdom, and mighty wonders were wrought through them.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 71. The Faith of Moses (11:24-27)

"The apostle, as we showed before, takes his instances from the three states of the church under the Old Testament. The first was that which was constituted in the giving of the first promise, continuing to the call of Abraham. Herein his first instance is that of Abel, in whose sacrifice the faith of that state of the church was first publicly confessed and by whose martyrdom it was confirmed. The next state had its beginning and confirmation in the call of Abraham, with the covenant made with him and the token thereof. He therefore is the second great instance on the roll of testimonies. The constitution and consecration of the third state of the church was in giving of the law and herein an instance is given in the law-giver himself. All to manifest, that whatever outward variations the church was liable to, and pass under, yet faith and the promises were the same, of the same efficacy and power under them all" (John Owen, 1616-1683).

In approaching the careful study of our present verses, it is of great importance to observe that they begin *a new section* of Hebrews 11. If this be not seen, they cannot be interpreted aright. The opening verse of each section of this chapter takes us back to *the beginning* of the life of faith, and each one presents a different aspect of the nature or character of saving faith. The first three verses of Hebrews 11 are introductory, the fourth beginning the first division. There, in the

example of Abel, we see where the life of faith begins (at conversion), namely, with the conscience being awakened to a consciousness of our lost condition, with the soul making a complete surrender to God, and with the heart resting upon the perfect satisfaction made by Christ our Surety. That which is chiefly emphasized there is *faith in the blood*. But placing his faith in the blood of Christ *is not all* that is done by a sinner when he passes from death unto life.

The second section of Hebrews 11 commences at verse 8, where we have set before us another aspect of conversion, or the starting-point of the life of faith. Conversion is the reflex action or effect from a soul which has received an effectual call from God. This is illustrated by the case of Abraham, who was, originally, an idolater, as we all were in our unregenerate state. The Lord of glory appeared unto him, quickened him into newness of life, delivered him from his former manner of existence, and gave him the promise of a future inheritance. The response of Abraham was radical and revolutionary. He set aside his natural inclinations, crucified his fleshly affections, and entered upon an entirely new path. That which is central in *his* case was, *implicit obedience*, the setting aside of his own will and the becoming completely subject to the will of God. But even that *is not all* that is done by the sinner when he passes from death unto life.

The case of Moses brings before us yet another side of conversion, or the beginning of the life of faith, a side which is sadly ignored in most of the “evangelism” of our day. It describes a leading characteristic of *saving* faith, which few professing Christians now hear (still less know) anything about. It shows us that saving faith does something more than “believe” or “accept Christ as a personal Saviour.” It exhibits faith as a definite decision of the mind, as an act of the will, as a personal and studied *choice*. It reveals the fundamental fact that saving faith includes, yea, begins with, a deliberate renunciation or turning away from all that is opposed to God, a determination to utterly *deny self*, and an electing to submit unto whatever trials may be incident to a life of piety. It shows us that a saving faith causes its possessor to turn away from godless companions and henceforth to seek fellowship with the despised saints of God.

There is much more involved in the act of saving faith than is generally supposed. “We mistake it if we think it *only to be* a strong confidence. It is so indeed, but there are other things also. It is such an appreciative esteem of our Christ and His benefits, that all other things are lessened in our opinion, estimation, and affection. The nature of faith is set forth by the apostle when he saith, ‘But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death’ (Phi 3:7-10). And therefore, true faith makes us dead to the world, and all the interests and honours thereof, and is to be known not so much by our confidence, as *by our mortification and weanedness*—when we carry all our comforts in our hands, as ready to part with them, if the Lord called us to leave them” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb 11:24-25). Here we see the nature and influence of a saving faith. Two things are to be particularly noted—in it there is an act of relinquishment and an act of embracing. In conversion, there is a turning from and also a turning unto. Hence, before the sinner is invited to “return unto the Lord,” he is first bidden to “*forsake his way*,” yes, *his way*—having “his *own*

way.” So too we are called on to “repent” first, and then “be converted,” that our sins may be “blotted out” (Act 3:19).

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself” (Mat 16:24). What is meant by the *denying* of “self”? This, the abridging ourselves of those things which are pleasing to the flesh. There are three things which are chiefly prized by the natural man—life, wealth, and honour, and so in the verses which immediately follow, Christ propounded three maxims to counter them. First, He says, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Mat 16:25). That is, he who thinks first and foremost of his own life, whose great aim is to minister unto “number one,” shall perish. Second, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mat 16:26), showing us the comparative worthlessness of earthly riches. Third, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Mat 16:27). *That* is the honour we should seek.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Heb 11:24). Here was a notable case of self-denial. Moses deliberately renounced the privileges and pleasures of a royal palace. It was not that he was now disowned and cast out by the woman who had adopted him, but that he voluntarily relinquished a position of affluence and ease, disdaining both its wealth and dignities. Nor was this the rash impulse of an inexperienced youth, but the studied decision of one who had now reached the age of forty (Act 7:23). The disciples said, “We have forsaken all, and followed thee” (Mat 19:27). Their “all” was a net and fishing-tack, but Moses abandoned a principality!

The denying of self is absolutely essential and where it exists not, grace is absent. The first article in the covenant is, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo 20:3). *He* must have the pre-eminence in our hearts and lives. God has not the glory of *God* unless we honour Him thus. Now God does not have the uppermost place in our hearts until *His* favour be esteemed above all things and until we dread above everything the offending of *Him*. As long as we can break with God in order to preserve any worldly interest of ours, we prefer that interest above God. If we are content to offend God rather than displease our friends or relatives, then we are greatly deceived if we regard ourselves as genuine Christians. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mat 10:37).

“Faith is a grace that will teach a man to openly renounce all worldly honors, advantages, and preferments, with the advantage annexed thereto. When God calls us from them, we cannot enjoy them with a good conscience” (Thomas Manton). We are often put to the test of having to choose between God and things, duty and pleasure, heeding our conscience or gratifying the flesh. The presence and vigour of faith is to be proved by our *self-denial*! It is easy to speak contemptuously of the world and earthly things, but what is my *first care*? Is it to *seek* God or temporal prosperity? To *please* Him or self? If I am hankering after an increase in wages or a better position, and am fretful because of disappointment, it is a sure proof that a worldly spirit governs me. What is my *chief delight*? earthly riches, honours, comforts, or communion with God? Can I truly say, “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand” (Psa 84:10)?

“All believers are not called to make the same sacrifices, or to endure the same trials for righteousness’ sake, nor have all the same measure of faith. Yet, without some experience and consciousness of *this* kind, we are not warranted to conclude that we are of Moses’ religion, for a common walking stick more resembles Aaron’s fruitful rod, than the faith of many modern professors of evangelical truth does the self-denying faith of Moses or Abraham” (Thomas Scott,



1747-1821). The faith of God's elect is a faith which "overcometh the world" (1Jo 5:4) and not one which suffers its possessor to be overcome! "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24), not ought to, but *have* done so—in some real measure at least!

The great *refusal* of Moses consisted in a firm resolution of mind not to remain in that state wherein he had been brought up. This was not attained, we may be sure, without a hard fight, without the exercise of faith in prayer and trust in God. He knew full well all that his decision involved, yet by grace, made it unhesitatingly. His resolution was made known not by a formal avowal, but by deeds, for actions ever speak louder than words. There is no hint in the sacred record that Moses verbally acquainted his foster-mother with his decision, but his converse with his brethren (Exo 2:11, etc.) revealed where his heart was and identified him with their religion and covenant. Ah, dear reader, it is one thing to *talk* well about the things of God, but it is quite another to *walk* accordingly, as it is one thing to pen articles and deliver sermons, and quite another to *practice* what we preach!

Not only was Moses' renunciation of his favoured position a grand triumph over the lusts of the flesh, but it was also a notable victory over carnal reason. First of all, his action would seem to indicate the height of *ingratitude* against his foster-mother. Pharaoh's daughter had spared his life as an infant, brought him into her own home, reared him as her son, and had him educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. For him to turn his back upon her now would appear as though he was devoid of appreciation—so little is the natural man able to understand the motives which regulate the workings of faith. The truth is that the commandments of the second table are binding upon us no further than our compliance with them is agreeable to our obedience unto the commandments of the first table. The saint is neither to accept favours from the world, nor to express gratitude for the same, if such be contrary to the fear of God and the maintenance of a good conscience.

We are never to be dutiful to man at the expense of being undutiful to God. All relations must give way before preserving a clear conscience toward Him. His rights are paramount, and must be recognized and responded to, no matter how much the doing so may clash with our seeming obligations unto our fellows. A friend or kinsman may be entertaining me in his home and show me much kindness through the week, but that will not justify or require me to join him on a picnic or frolic on the Sabbath day. "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 language of the Christian ought ever to be, "Wist ye not that I must be about *my Father's* business?" (Luk 2:49).

To enjoy worldly honours is not evil in itself, for good men have lived in bad courts. Daniel is a clear case in point. Most of his life was spent in high civic office. When divine providence has given worldly riches or worldly prestige to us, they are to be entertained and enjoyed, yet with a holy jealousy and prayerful watchfulness that we be not puffed up by them, remembering that, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Pro 16:19). But such things are to be renounced when they are sinful in themselves or when they cannot be retained with a clear conscience. Against his conscience, Pilate preferred to condemn Christ than lose Caesar's friendship and stands before us in Holy Writ as a lasting warning. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mat 26:41).

Again: not only did Moses' great refusal seem like gross ingratitude unto her who had adopted him, but it also looked like flying in the face of Providence. It was God who had placed him

where he was, why, then, should he forsake such an advantageous position? Had Moses leaned unto his own understanding and listened to the dictates of carnal reason, he had found many pretexts for remaining where he then was. Why not stay there and seek to reform Egypt? Why not use his great influence with the king on behalf of the oppressed Hebrews? Had he remained in the court of Pharaoh, he would escape much affliction. Yes, and miss too the “recompense of the reward.” Ah, my reader, unbelief is very fertile, argues very plausibly, and can suggest many logical reasons why we *should not* practice self-denial!

What was it, then, which prompted Moses to make this noble sacrifice? A patriotic impulse? a fanatical love for his brethren? No, he was guided neither by reason nor sentiment. It was “by *faith*” that Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. It was the clinging of his heart to the divine promise, the apprehension of things not seen by the outward eye, the confident expectation of future reward. Ah, it is faith which imparts to the heart a true estimate of things, which views objects in their real light, and which discerns the comparative worthlessness of what the poor worldling prizes so highly, and through his mad quest after which he loses his soul. Faith views the eternity to come, and when faith is in healthy exercise, its possessor finds it easy to relinquish the baubles of time and sense. Then it is the saint exclaims, “Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them” (Psa 39:6).

What a truly remarkable thing that one in Egypt’s court *should have* such a “faith”! Moses had been brought up in a heathen palace, where there was no knowledge of the true God, yea, nothing but idolatry, wantonness, and profanity. Yes, some of Christ’s sheep are situated in queer and unexpected places, nevertheless, the Shepherd seeks them out and either delivers them from or sustains them in it. The wife of “Herod’s steward” (Luk 8:3), the saints in Nero’s “household” (Phi 4:22) are notable examples. What illustrations are these of “The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies” (Psa 110:2)! However His enemies may rage, seek to blot out His name, and root out His kingdom, Christ shall preserve a remnant according to the election of grace “even where Satan’s seat is” (Rev 2:13).

Someone may object, “But Joseph had faith as well as Moses, yet he did not leave the court, but continued there till his death.” Circumstances alter cases! Their occasions and conditions were not alike. “God raised up Joseph to feed His people in Egypt, therefore his abode in the court was necessary under kings that favoured them. But Moses was called not to feed his people in Egypt, but to lead them out of Egypt and the king of Egypt was now become their enemy, and kept them under bitter bondage. To remain in an idolatrous court of a pagan prince is one thing, but to remain in a persecuting court, where he must be accessory to their persecutions, is another thing” (Thomas Manton).

“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb 11:25). This gives us the positive side of Moses’ glorious decision. There is both a negative and a positive side to faith. First, a *refusing* and then a *choosing*, and that order is unchanging. There must be a “cease to do evil” before there can be a “learning to do well” (Isa 1:16-17). There must be a “hate the evil” before there is a “love the good” (Amo 5:15). There must be a “confessing *and forsaking*” of sin before there is “mercy” (See Pro 28:13). The prodigal must *leave* the far country before he can go to the Father (See Luk 15). The sinner must abandon his idols before he can take up the cross and follow Christ (Mar 10:21). There must be a turning to God “*from* idols” before there can be a serving “the living and true God” (1Th 1:9). The heart must turn its back upon the world before it can receive Christ as Lord and Saviour.

“Moses gave up the *world*; and ambition had the prospect of honour and greatness; the culture of the most civilized state was fascinating to the mind; treasure and wealth held out potent allurements. And all this—and does it not comprise ‘all that is in the world,’ and in its most attractive and elevated manner?—Moses gave up. And on the other side what awaited him? To join a down-trodden nation of slaves, whose only riches were the promises of the invisible God” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891). A man is known by his *choice*. Do you do evil for a little profit? Do you avoid duty because of some trifling inconvenience? Are you turned out of the way because of reproach?

Moses preferred to *suffer* affliction with the people of God than to *enjoy* the pleasures of sin for a brief season. Do you? He judged it the greatest misery of all to live in sin. Do you? Here is an important test—which gives you greater grief, sin or bodily affliction? Which troubles you the more—suffering loss in the world, or displeasing God? There are thousands of professing Christians who complain of their physical aches and pains, but how rarely do we hear any groaning over the body of sin and death! When you are afflicted in the body, which is your dominant desire—to be freed from the suffering or for God to *sanctify* the suffering unto the good of your soul? Ah, my reader, what *real and supernatural* difference is there between you and the moral worldling? Is it only in your creed, what you believe with the intellect? “The demons believe.”

Yes, it is our *refusal* and our *choice* which identifies us, which makes it manifest whether we are children of the devil or children of God. It is the property of a gracious heart to prefer the greatest suffering—physical, mental, or social—to the least sin. And when sin is committed, it is repudiated, sorrowed over, confessed, and forsaken. When “suffering” is inflicted upon saints by persecutors, the offense is done unto us, but “sin” is committed against God! “Sin” separates from God (Isa 59:2), “suffering” drives the Christian nearer to God. “Affliction” only affects the body, “sin” injures the soul. “Affliction” is from God, but “sin” is from the devil. But naught save a real, spiritual, supernatural faith will prefer suffering affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

“None of the exemplifications of the importance of believing, brought forth by the apostle, is better fitted to serve his purpose than that which we have been considering. The Hebrew Christians were called on to part with an honour which they were accustomed to value above all other dignities. They were excommunicated by their unbelieving brethren and denied the name of true children of Abraham. Their unbelieving countrymen were enjoying wealth and honour. The little flock they were called on to join were suffering affliction and reproach. Now, how is this to be done? Look at Moses. Believe as Moses believed and you will find it easy to judge, choose, and act as Moses did. If you believe what Christ has plainly revealed that ‘It is His Father’s good pleasure to give’ His little flock, after passing through much tribulation, ‘the kingdom,’ (See Luk 12:32) if you are persuaded that, according to His declaration, wrath is coming to the uttermost on their oppressors, you will not hesitate to separate yourselves completely from your unbelieving country-men.

“The practical bearing of the passage is not confined to the Hebrew converts or to the Christians of the primitive age. In every country and in every age, Jesus proclaims, ‘If any man would be my disciple he must deny himself, he must take up the cross, and follow me.’ The power of the present world can only be put down by ‘the power of the world to come’ and as it is through *sense* that the first power operates on our minds, it is through *faith* alone that the second power can operate on our minds. Some find it impossible to make the sacrifices Christianity

requires, because they have no faith. They must be made, otherwise our Christianity is but a name, our faith is but a pretense, and our hope a delusion” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### 23. His Stay at Ziklag

One of the chief differences between the Holy Spirit’s description of biblical characters and the delineations in human biographies is that the former has faithfully presented their failures and falls, showing us that they were indeed men of “like passions with us.” Whereas the latter (with very rare exceptions) record little else than the fair and favourable side of their subjects, leaving the impression they were more angelic than human. Biographies need to be read sparingly, especially modern ones, and then with due caution (remembering that there is much “between the lines” not related), lest a false estimate of the life of a Christian be formed, and the *honest* reader be driven to despair. But God has painted the features of biblical characters in the colours of reality and truth, and thus we find that “as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man” (Pro 27:19).

The *practical* importance (and it is *that* which should ever be our first and chief quest as we read and ponder the Scriptures) of what has just been pointed out should preserve both preacher and hearer from a one-sided idea of Christian experience. A saint on earth is not a sinless being, nor on the other hand, does sin have complete dominion over him. In consequence of both the “flesh” and the “spirit” still indwelling him, in “*many things*” he offends (See Jam 3:2), and in many things he pleases God. The “old man” is not only still alive (though the Christian is to “reckon” it as being *judicially* dead before God, Romans 6:11), but is constantly active. And though divine grace restrain it from breaking forth into much outward evil, yet it defiles all our inner being and pollutes our best endeavours both Godward and manward, Romans 7:14-25. Nevertheless, the “new man” is also active, producing that which is glorifying to God.

It is because of this *dual* experience of the Christian that we are ever in danger of concentrating too much on the one aspect, to the ignoring of the other. Those with a pessimistic turn of mind or whose body suffers from a torpid liver, need to watch against dwelling too much on the gloomy side of the Christian life and spending too much time in Job and the Lamentations, to the neglect of the later Psalms and the epistle to the Philippians. In the past, a certain class of writers occupied themselves almost exclusively with the contemplation of human depravity and its fearful workings in the saint, conveying the idea that a constant mourning over indwelling sin and groaning over its activities was the only mark of high spiritual experience. Such people are only happy when they are miserable. We counsel those who have been strongly influenced by such teaching to turn frequently to John’s Gospel, chapters 14 to 17, and turn each verse into prayer *and praise*.

On the other side, those with a buoyant temperament and optimistic turn of mind need to watch against the tendency to appropriate and meditate upon the promises to the almost total

ignoring of the precepts of Scripture, to strive against lightness and superficiality, and to be careful they do not mistake exuberance of natural spirits for the steadier and deeper flow of spiritual joy. To be all the time dwelling upon the Christian's standing, his privileges and blessings, to the neglect of his state, obligations, and failures, will beget pride and self-righteousness. Such people need to prayerfully ponder Romans 7, the first half of Hebrews 12, and much in 1 Peter. Sinful self and all its wretched failures should be sufficiently noticed so as to keep us in the dust before God. Christ and His great salvation should be contemplated so as to lift us above self and fill the soul with thanksgiving.

The above meditations have been suggested by that portion of David's life which is now to engage our attention. The more it be carefully pondered, the more should we be delivered from entertaining an erroneous conception of the experience and history of a saint. Not that we are to seize upon these sad blemishes in David to *excuse* our own faults—no indeed, that would be wickedness of the worst kind, but we are to be *humbled* by the realization that the same evil nature indwells *us*, and produces works in you and me equally vile. Those who are *surprised* that the Psalmist should act as he here did must be woefully ignorant of the “plague” of their own hearts and blind unto sins in their own lives which are just as abominable in the sight of the Holy One as were those of David's.

In our last article, we saw that unbelief and fear so gained the upper hand over David that he exclaimed, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines” (1Sa 27:1). And yet, probably only a short while before, this same David had declared, “Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident” (Psa 27:3). Yes, and has not the reader, when in close communion with the Lord, and when the sails of faith were fully spread and filled with the breeze of the Spirit, said or felt the same? And alas that it should be so, has not this confidence waned, and then disappeared before some fresh trial! How these sad lapses should show us *ourselves* and produce real humility and self-abasement. How often expressions from our own lips in the past condemn us in the present!

Then we pointed out that, “under the pressure of trial, *relief* is what the flesh most desires.” Perhaps the reader may ask, “but is not that natural?” Yes indeed, but is it *spiritual*? Our first desire in trial, as in everything else, should be that *God* may be honoured and for this we should earnestly seek grace to so conduct ourselves that we may “glorify ye the LORD in the fires” (Isa 24:15). Our next concern should be that our *soul* may profit from the painful experience and for this we should beg the Lord to graciously *sanctify* it unto our lasting good. But alas, when unbelief dominates us, *God* is forgotten and deliverance, our own ease, obsess the mind, and hence it is that—unless divine grace interposes—we seek relief in the wrong quarter and by unspiritual means. Thus it was here with David. He and his men passed over unto Achish, the king of Gath.

“And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household” (1Sa 27:3). From these words, it seems that Achish, the Philistine, made no demur against David and his men entering his territory, rather does it look as though he met with a friendly and kindly reception. Thus, from present appearances—the obtaining, at last, of a quiet dwelling place—it seemed that the fleshly plan of David was meeting with real success, that Providence was smiling upon him. Yes, it is often this way *at first* when a Christian takes things into his own hands—to carnal reason the sequel shows he did the right thing. Ah, but later on, he discovers otherwise. One false step is followed by another, just as the telling of a lie is usually succeeded by other lies to cover it. So it was now with David. He went from bad to worse.

“And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him” (1Sa 27:4). This too would seem to confirm the thought that David had acted wisely and that God was blessing his worldly scheme, for his family and people now rested safely from the approaches of their dreaded foe. But when everything is going smoothly with the Christian and the enemy ceases to harass him, then is the time, generally speaking, when he needs to suspect that something is wrong with his testimony, and beg God to show him what it is. Nor was Saul’s cessation of hostility due to any improvement of character, but because he dared not to come where David now was. “Thus many seem to leave their sin, but really their sins leave them; they would persist in them if they could” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?” (1Sa 27:5). David knew from experience how jealous were kings and their favourites, so to prevent the envy of Achish’s courtiers, he deemed it well not to remain too near and receive too many favours at his hands. Probably the idolatry and corruption which abounded in the royal city made David desirous of getting his family and people removed therefrom. But in the light of the sequel, it seems that the principal motive which prompted him to make this request was that he might have a better opportunity to fall upon some of the enemies of Israel without the king of Gath being aware of it. The practical lesson for us is that, when we forsake the path of God’s appointment, a spirit of restlessness and discontent is sure to possess us.

David presented his request to Achish very modestly, “Give me a place in *some* town in the country, that I may dwell there,” where they could enjoy greater privacy and more freedom from the idolatry of the land. Six hundred men and their families would crowd the royal city, and might prove quite a burden, while there was always the danger of the subjects of Achish regarding David as a *rival* in state and dignity. But to what a low level had God’s anointed descended when he speaks of himself as the “servant” of Achish! How far from communion with the Lord was he, when one of the uncircumcised is to choose his dwelling-place for him! A child of God is “the Lord’s *freeman*” (1Co 7:22). Yes, but to maintain this in a practical way, he must walk in faith and obedience to Him, otherwise he will be brought in bondage to the creature, as David was.

“Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day” (1Sa 27:6). Originally this city had been given to the tribe of Judah, (Jos 15:31), then to Simeon (Jos 19:5), though it seems that neither of them possessed it, but that it came into the hands of the Philistines. “Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day” (1Sa 27:6). Being given unto David, who shortly after became king, this section was annexed to the crown-lands, and ever after it was part of the portion of the kings of Judah. So that it was given to David not as a temporary possession, but under God, as a permanent one for his descendants. Truly, the ways of the Lord are past finding out.

“And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months” (1Sa 27:7). “But rest reached by self-will or disobedience is anything rather than peace to the heart that fears God and loves His service. David could not forget that Israel, whom he had forsaken, was God’s people, nor that the Philistines, whom he had joined were God’s enemies. He could not but remember his own peculiar relation to God and to His people—for Samuel had anointed him and even Saul had blessed him as the destined king of Israel. His conscience, therefore, must have been ill at ease, and the stillness and rest of Ziklag would only cause him to be more sensible of its disquietude” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

“And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land” (1Sa 27:8). “When the

consciences of God's servants tell them that their position is wrong, one of their devices not unfrequently is, to give themselves, with fresh energy, to the attainment of some right end, as if rightly directed or successful energy could atone for committed evil, and satisfy the misgivings of a disquieted heart. Accordingly, David, still retaining the self-gained rest of Ziklag, resolved that it should not be the rest of inactivity, but that he would thence put forth fresh energies against the enemies of God and of His people. The Amalekites were nigh. The Amalekites were they of whom the Lord had sworn that He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. David therefore went up against them and triumphed" (Benjamin W. Newton).

Those which David and his men invaded were some of the original tribes which inhabited Canaan, and were such as had escaped the sword of Saul and had fled to more distant parts. His attack upon them was not an act of cruelty, for those people had long before been divinely sentenced to destruction. Yet though they were the enemies of the Lord and His people, David's attack upon them was ill-timed, and more likely than not the chief motive which prompted him was the obtaining of food and plunder for his forces. "Nothing could be more complete than his success—'David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel.' (1Sa 27:9). Ziklag was enriched with spoil and that the spoil of the enemies of the Lord. What prosperity then could be greater—what apparently more immediately from God"? (Benjamin W. Newton).

A solemn warning, which we do well to take to heart, is pointed out for us in verses 1 Samuel 27:8-9, namely, not to measure the right or wrong of a course of conduct by the *success* which appears to attend it. This principle is now being flagrantly disregarded, the scripturalness or unscripturalness of an action concerns few professing Christians today, so long as it seems to produce good results, this is all that matters. Women are tolerated in the pulpit, worldly devices are brought into the "church," fleshly and high-pressure methods are adopted by "evangelists," and so long as crowds are drawn, the young people "held," and "converts" made, it is argued that the end justifies the means. If "souls are being saved," the great majority are prepared to wink at almost anything today, supposing that the "blessing of God" (?) is a sure proof that nothing serious is wrong. So the children of Israel might have reasoned when the waters flowed from the rock which Moses disobediently smote in his anger. So David might have concluded when such success attended his attack upon the Amalekites! To judge by visible results is walking by sight. To measure everything by Holy Writ and reject all that is out of harmony therewith is walking by faith.

"And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish" (1Sa 27:9). Mark well the closing words of this verse. One had thought that Achish was the last man whom David would wish to see at this time. It had been far more prudent had he returned quietly to Ziklag, but as we pointed out in a previous article, when a saint is out of communion with God and controlled by unbelief, he no longer acts according to the dictates of common sense. A striking and solemn illustration of that fact is here before us. O that writer and reader may lay this well to heart—*faith and wisdom* are inseparably linked together. Nothing but folly can issue from an unbelieving heart, that is, from a heart which has not been won by divine grace.

"And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day?" (1Sa 27:10). No doubt the king of Gath was surprised, as he had reason to be, when he saw David and his men so heavily laden with their booty, and therefore does he inquire where they had been. Sad indeed is it to hear the reply given, "And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites." Though not a downright lie, yet it was an equivocation,

made with the design of deceiving, and therefore cannot be defended, nor is it to be imitated by us. David was not willing that Achish should know the truth. He did not now play the part of a madman, as he had on a former occasion, but fearful of losing his self-chosen place of protection, he dissembles unto the king. The Amalekites were fellow-Canaanites with the Philistines, and if not in league with them, Achish and his people would probably be apprehensive of danger by harbouring such a powerful foe in their midst and would want to expel them. To avoid this, David resorted to deception. O what need has writer and reader to pray daily, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

## HEART WORK

### Part Five

“God is not the author of confusion” (1Co 14:33). No, the devil causes that, and he has succeeded in creating much in the thinking of many, by confounding the “heart” with the “nature.” People say, “I was born with an evil heart and I cannot help it.” It would be more correct to say, “I was born with an evil nature, which I am responsible to subdue.” The Christian needs to clearly recognize that *in addition to* his two “natures”—the flesh and the spirit—he has a heart which God requires him to “keep.” We have already touched upon this point, but deem it advisable to add a further word thereon. I cannot change or better my “nature,” but I may and must my “heart.” For example, “nature” is slothful and loves ease, but the Christian is to redeem the time and be zealous of good works. Nature hates the thought of death, but the Christian should bring his heart to desire to depart and be with Christ.

The popular religion of the day is either a head or a hand one, that is to say, the labouring to acquire a larger and fuller intellectual grasp of the things of God, or a constant round of activities called “service for the Lord.” But the *heart* is neglected! Thousands are reading, studying, taking “Bible-courses,” but for all the *spiritual* benefits their souls derive, they might as well be engaged in breaking stones. Lest it be thought that such a stricture is too severe, we quote a sentence from a letter recently received from one who has completed no less than eight of these “Bible-study courses,” “There was nothing in that ‘hard work’ which ever called for self-examination, which led me to really know God, and appropriate the Scriptures to my deep need.” No, of course there was not. Their compilers—like nearly all the speakers at the big “Bible conferences”—*studiously* avoid all that is unpalatable to the flesh, all that condemns the natural man, all that pierces and searches the conscience. O the tragedy of this *head* “Christianity.”

Equally pitiable is the *hand* religion of the day, when young “converts” are put to teaching a Sunday school class, urged to “speak” in the open air, or take up “personal work.” How many thousands of beardless youths and young girls are now engaged in what is called “winning souls for Christ,” when *their own* souls are spiritually starved! They may “memorize” two or three verses of Scripture a day, but that does not mean their souls are being fed. How many are giving their evenings to helping in some “mission,” who need to be spending time in “the secret place of



the Most High” (Psa 91:1)! And how many bewildered souls are using the major part of the Lord’s day in rushing from one meeting to another, instead of seeking from God that which will fortify them against temptations of the week. O the tragedy of this *hand* “Christianity”!

How subtle the devil is! Under the guise of promoting growth in “the knowledge of the Lord,” he gets people to attend a ceaseless round of meetings, reading an almost endless number of religious periodicals and books, or under the pretense of “honouring the Lord” by all this so-called “service.” He induces the one or the other to *neglect* the great task which GOD has set before us—“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). Ah, it is far easier to speak to others, than it is to constantly use and improve all holy means and duties to preserve the soul from sin, and maintain it in sweet and free communion with God. It is far easier to spend an hour reading a sensational article upon “the signs of the time,” than it is to spend an hour in agonizing before God for purifying and rectifying grace!

This work of keeping the heart is *of supreme importance*. The total disregard of it means that we are mere formalists. “My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26). Until *that* be done, God will accept nothing from us. The prayers and praises of our lips, the labour of our hands, yea, and a correct outward walk, are things of no value in *His* sight, while the heart be estranged from Him. As the inspired apostle declared, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [*love*], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [*love*], I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [*love*], it profiteth me nothing” (1Co 13:1-3). If the heart be not right with God, we cannot *worship* Him, though we may go through the form of it. Watch diligently, then, your love for Him.

God cannot be imposed upon and he that takes *no* care to order his heart aright before Him is a hypocrite. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, *but their heart* goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument” (Eze 33:31-32). Here are a company of formal hypocrites, as is evident from the words, “as my people.” Like them, but not of them! And what constituted them impostors? Their outside was very fair—high professions, reverent postures, much seeming delight in the means of grace. Ah, but their *hearts* were not set on God, but were commanded by their lusts and went after covetousness.

But lest a real Christian should infer from the above that *he* is a hypocrite too, because many times his heart wanders, and he finds—strive all he may—that he cannot keep his mind stayed upon God either when praying, reading His Word, or engaged in public worship, to him we answer, the objection carries its own refutation. Thou sayest, “strive all I may.” Ah, if you *have*, then the blessing of the upright is yours, even though God sees well to exercise you over the affliction of a wandering mind. There remains still much in the understanding and affections to humble thee, but if you are *exercised* over them, *strive against* them, and *sorrow over* your very imperfect success, then that is quite enough to clear thee of the charge of reigning hypocrisy.

The keeping of the heart is supremely important because “out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). It is the source and fountain of all vital actions and operations. The heart is the warehouse, the hand and tongue but the shops. What is in *these* comes from *thence*—the heart contrives and the members execute. It is in the heart the principles of the spiritual life are formed, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the

evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil” (Luk 6:45). Then let us diligently see to it that the heart be well stored with pious instruction, seeking to increase in grateful love, reverential fear, hatred of sin, and benevolence in all its exercises, that from within these holy springs may flow and fructify our whole conduct and conversation.

This work of keeping the heart is *the hardest of all*. “To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains, but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon Him—this will cost something! To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy, but to get thy heart broken for sin whilst thou art confessing it, be melted with free grace, whilst thou art blessing God for it, be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God’s infinite holiness, and to *keep* thy heart in *this* frame, not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and travailing pain of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin and compose the external acts of thy life in a laudable and comely manner, is no great matter—even carnal persons by the force of common principles can do this. But to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up a holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is *not* easy” (John Flavel, 1630-1691).

Ah, dear reader, it is far, far easier to speak in the open air than to uproot pride from thy soul. It calls for much less toil to go out and distribute tracts, than it does to cast out of your mind unholy thoughts. One can speak to the unsaved much more readily than he can deny self, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ in the path of obedience. And one can teach a class in the Sunday school with far less trouble than he can teach himself how to strengthen his own spiritual graces. To keep the heart with all diligence calls for frequent examination of its frames and dispositions, the observing of its attitude toward God, and the prevailing directions of its affections, and that is something which no empty professor can be brought to do! To give liberally to religious enterprises he may, but to give himself unto the searching, purifying, and keeping of his heart, he will not.

This work of keeping the heart is *a constant one*. “The keeping of the heart is such a work as is never done till life be done. This labour and our life end together. It is with a Christian in his business as it is with seamen that have sprung a leak at sea. If they tug not constantly at the pump, the water increases upon them, and will quickly sink them. It is in vain for them to say the work is hard and we are weary. There is no time or condition in the life of a Christian, which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in the keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in the keeping up of Moses’ hands, whilst Israel and Amalek were fighting below (Exo 17:12). No sooner do Moses’ hands grow heavy and sink down, but Amalek prevails. You know it cost David and Peter many a sad day and night for intermitting the watch over their own hearts but a few minutes” (John Flavel).

As long as we are in this world, we must exercise the greatest diligence in protecting the heart. A significant type for the need of this is found in Numbers 19, “This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean” (Num 19:14-15). How many of our readers have sufficient discernment to perceive the *spiritual* meaning of this? Ponder it a moment before you read further. The “tent” into which “death” has entered, is this world (Rom 5:12). The “vessel” is the human heart (Mat 25:4; 2Co 4:7). The vessel which hath “no covering bound upon it” is an *unkept* heart and this is *defiled* by the presence of death! It is a striking illustration of the world’s corrupting influence entering as soon as the heart be

unguarded. But if the heart be “covered”—protected, vigilantly kept—then the world cannot harm it.

Having sought to show that the keeping of the heart is the great work assigned the Christian, in which the very soul and life of true religion consists, and without the performance of which all other duties are unacceptable to God, let us now point out some of the corollaries and consequences which necessarily follow from this fact:

1. The labours which many have taken in religion are lost. Many great services have been performed, many wonderful works wrought by men, which have been utterly rejected of God, and shall receive no recognition in the day of rewards. Why? Because they took no pains to keep their hearts with God in those duties. This is the fatal rock upon which thousands of vain professors have wrecked to their eternal undoing—they were diligent about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have professors spent in hearing, reading, conferring, and praying! and yet as to the supreme task God has assigned, did nothing. Tell me, thou vain professor, when didst thou shed tears for the coldness, deadness, and worldliness of thy heart? When didst thou spend five minutes in a serious effort to keep, purge, improve it? Thinkest thou that such an easy religion can save thee? If so, we must *inverse* the words of Christ and say, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth unto life, and many there be that go in thereat.”

2. If the keeping of the heart be the great work of the Christian, then how few *real* Christians are there in the world! If everyone who has learned the dialect of Christianity and can talk like a Christian, if everyone who has natural gifts and abilities, and who is helped by the common assisting presence of the Spirit to pray and teach like a Christian, if all who associate themselves with the people of God, contribute of their means to His cause, take delight in public ordinances, and pass as Christians, were real ones, then the number of the saints would be considerable. But alas, to what a little flock do they shrink when measured by *this* rule. How few make conscience of keeping their hearts, watching their thoughts, judging their motives. Ah, there is no human applause to induce men to engage in this difficult work, and were hypocrites *to* do so, they would quickly discover what they do not care to know. This heart-work is left in the hands of a few hidden ones. Reader, are *you* one of them?

3. Unless real Christians spend more time and pains about their hearts than they have done, they are never likely to grow in grace, be of much use to God or be possessors of much comfort in this world. You say, “But my heart seems so listless and dead”—do you wonder at it, when you keep it not in daily communion with Him who is the fountain of life? If your body had received no more concern and attention than your soul, what state would it now be in? O my brother or sister, has not your zeal run in the wrong channels? God may be enjoyed even in the midst of earthly employments, “Enoch walked with God...and begat sons and daughters” (Gen 5:22)—he did not retire into a monastery, nor is there any need for you to.

4. It is high time the Christian reader set to this heart-work in real earnest. Do not you have to lament, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song 1:6)? Then away with fruitless controversies and idle questions. Away with empty names and vain shows. Away with harsh censuring of others—turn upon thyself. You have been a stranger long enough to this work. You have trifled about the borders of religion too long. The world has deterred you from this vitally necessary work too long. Will you not now resolve to look better after thy heart? Haste thee to thy closet.

5. He that *will* keep his heart must take heed against plunging himself into a multiplicity of earthly business (either in his worldly calling or so-called religious “service”) so that he is unable

to make his spiritual and eternal interests his chief concern. You say, “But I must live,” yes, and you must die! Put the claims of God and your heart first, and He will not suffer thy body to starve! Then take heed lest you neglect your soul by gratifying the immoderate clamouring of the flesh. Christ rebuked Martha because she was troubled about “many things,” and assured her that but *one* thing was “needful.” O say with David, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple” (Psa 27:4).

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 5. The Zion of God

“I have been brought up, since my conversion, under dispensational teaching—pre-millennial. Now just where does the kingdom, as they teach it, come in? Does the Word of God teach a literal kingdom? It seems to, at least in the prophets and the Revelation. I realize that there is too much sensational preaching and not enough practical godliness being taught or lived.” Our main purpose in giving this extract from a letter recently to hand, is because it supplies an illustration of a mistake which is commonly made today. There is a certain class of preachers whose boast it is that they understand and interpret the Bible *literally* and their hearers are made to believe that this is one of the principal tests of orthodoxy. It is greatly to be feared that such men unwittingly condemn themselves, for in their ignorance they use a term concerning which few of them seem to know its meaning.

The best dictionaries tell us the word “literal” signifies, “according to the letter.” Now in the New Testament, there are a number of verses which present some pungent contrasts between the “letter” and the “spirit.” In Romans 2:27, the Holy Spirit asks, “Shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?” The Jews supposed that a *literal* compliance with the law of circumcision fully met God’s requirement, overlooking Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6. Hence, he is told, “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter” (Rom 2:29). “That of the heart, in the spirit” signifies that which penetrates to the roots of the soul, that which is inwardly efficacious. “Not in the letter” means, not that which was merely outward, according to the *literal* commandment.

Again, in 2 Corinthians 3:6, Paul said of Christ’s servants, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” “These words therefore express concisely the characteristic difference between the law and the Gospel. The one was external, the other spiritual. The one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case, the law was written on stone, in the other on the heart. The one therefore was *letter*, the other *spirit*” (Charles Hodge, 1797-1878). The Pharisees of Christ’s day were “literalists” and quite incapable of perceiving the *mystery* (like a kernel inside the shell) contained beneath the letter. Alas that so much of modern “Christianity” is

little better than a revival of the principles of Judaism. Alas that “dispensationalists” are as blind to the *spiritual* purport of Scripture as the Pharisees were when Christ said, “Whither I go, ye cannot come,” and they answered, “Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come” (Joh 8:21-22)!

Infidels have often alleged the Bible is full of contradictions. A charge which the well-meaning friends of the Bible have promptly denied. It is true there are not, and cannot be, any *real* contradictions in *God’s* Word, yet it is also a fact that there are numbers of *verbal* contradictions. For example, we are told in 1 Samuel 28:6, “Saul inquired of the LORD,” whereas in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14, we read that Saul died because he “inquired not of the Lord.” Again, in Proverbs 15:29, we are told, “The LORD is far from the wicked,” whereas in Acts 17:27, we read that the Lord is “*not far* from every one of us.” Again, in Romans 10:13, we are told, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” whereas in Proverbs 1:28, we read, “Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” Again, in Matthew 5:8, we read, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,” whereas in 1 Timothy 6:16, it is said of God, “whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” Our purpose in citing these passages is not to stumble the faith of the weak, but to stain the pride of those who are wise in their own conceits.

The passages referred to above ought to make it plain unto every candid mind that something more than a slavish adherence to the letter of the Scriptures is required if we are to understand them aright. Those who confine themselves to the principle of literalism will find it a hopeless task to reconcile such verses, but they who are not misled by the mere sound of words and their apparent surface meaning, should have no difficulty with them. Saul’s inquiry of the Lord was a hypocritical one and therefore not regarded by Him as a real inquiry at all. The wicked are far from God in a moral and spiritual sense, though as the Preserver of their beings, His hand daily holdeth their souls in life (Psa 66:9). It is only the calling upon the Lord from a penitent and contrite heart which brings salvation. The glorified will “see” or apprehend God to a far greater degree than they do now, but the finite creature will never be able to fully comprehend the Infinite.

In view of all that has been said above, it is scarcely surprising that the “literalists” of our day, the carnal “dispensationalists,” are completely at sea upon what the Scriptures have to say about “Zion,” for they see in it nothing more than a mountain located in Palestine. And thus one of the most blessed subjects treated of in the pages of Holy Writ is virtually reduced to an absurdity by these gross materialists. Nor has the writer any hope that *he* can convert them from their errors. It requires just as truly a miracle of grace to deliver one who has been caught fast in *this* snare, as it does to deliver a victim of Romanism, for the former is just as certain that he is “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15), as the latter is sure he belongs to “the only real church of Christ on earth.” But we do trust it will please God to use these articles to purge out of some of His own people the poison they have unconsciously imbibed from present-day leaders.

“But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which He loved” (Psa 78:68). “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her” (Psa 87:5). “Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come” (Psa 102:13). Now is it not apparent to any spiritual mind that to insist that “Zion” in these verses refers to some material mountain in Palestine is to reduce the Word of God unto a meaningless absurdity? How pitiable such a gross and carnal concept is may further be seen by this passage, “For the LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it” (Psa 132:13-14).

Now there are a number of plain passages in the Old Testament which show that “Zion” is another name for the people of God. For example, “Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt” (Psa 74:2). “Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD” (Psa 97:8). “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” (Isa 40:9). “And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, *Thou art my people*” (Isa 51:16).

The key to our present subject, though, is found in the New Testament, namely, Hebrews 12:22-23, “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly *and church of the Firstborn*.” Let us look closely at this. First of all, let us note attentively the particular epistle in which this blessed declaration is made. It is found in the epistle to the Hebrews, being addressed unto “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1). The great theme of that epistle is, The immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism. That theme is unfolded in several chapters. It comes out prominently in the twelfth Let the interested reader turn to ponder carefully Hebrews 12:18-24, where Sinai is the *symbol* of Judaism and Sion is the *symbol* of Christianity.

It will be observed that the above passage abounds in striking and solemn contrasts—other antitheses not there specified are equally noteworthy. Everything is in sharp opposition between them. Sinai is located in one of the driest and dreariest places on earth—in a “howling desert,” fitly representing the law which can afford neither succour nor refreshment. Mount Zion was situated in the midst of that land which “flowed with milk and honey,” meet emblem of the Gospel. Sinai means “cliff,” an object which is forbidding, barren, desolate. Zion signifies “sunny or shone upon,” as facing the south, ever basking in the warm rays of the sun. God came down on Sinai for only a brief season. He dwells in Zion forever. On the one, He appeared in terrible majesty. In the other, He is manifested in grace and blessing. At Sinai, the typical mediator trembled, saying, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” On Zion, Christ is crowned with glory and honour. The former, we are “*not* come unto” (Heb 12:18)—the latter, we *are* “come unto” (Heb 12:22).

It may be pointed out that the material mount Zion, figure of the spiritual Zion, was one of the mountains belonging to the range of Hermon (Deu 4:48)—the interested reader will find it profitable to look up the references to “Hermon” and ponder their *spiritual* significance. It lay to the southwest of Jerusalem, being the oldest and highest part of that ancient city. It was outside the city itself and separate from it, though frequently identified with it. Mount Zion had two heads or peaks—Moriah, on which the temple was built, the seat of the *worship* of God and the other, whereon the palace of David was built, the *royal* residence of the kings of Judah—a striking figure of the priestly and kingly offices of Christ, owned by the church! Thus, Zion was situated in the best part of the world—Canaan, the land which flowed with milk and honey, in the best part of that land—in Judah’s portion, in the best part of his heritage—Jerusalem, and in the best part of the metropolis—the city of David, 2 Samuel 6:12.

It is deeply interesting and instructive to trace the *history* of mount Zion. Originally it was the habitation of the Jebusites, a company of the idolatrous and cursed Canaanites, “The Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Jos 15:63). How that reminds us of, “Remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh...without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and

strangers from the covenants of promise” (Eph 2:11-12). David was the one who wrested it from them, “And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites...Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David” (2Sa 5:6-7). So Christ secured His elect by His victory over Satan. David fortified Zion for his own use, 1 Chronicles 11:7-9. Thus we see how suited it was to be the figure of the church of God. Many other Scriptures bear this out.

1. Zion was the object of God’s choice, “For the LORD hath chosen Zion” (Psa 132:13). 2. It was the place of His habitation, “Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion” (Psa 9:11), compare 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Corinthians 6:16. 3. It was a mighty fortress, “They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever” (Psa 125:1), compare “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat 16:18). 4. It was the most excellent of all cities, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psa 48:2), “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined” (Psa 50:2). 5. It was the special object of God’s love, “The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (Psa 87:2), compare Ephesians 5:25. 6. It was the place where God’s elect are born, “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her” (Psa 87:5).

7. It was the place of salvation, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come *out of Zion!* when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people,” that is, when He grants them a revival (Psa 14:7). 8. It was the place of divine blessing, “The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion” (Psa 128:5). Yea, it was the place of eternal life, “As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for *there* the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psa 133:3). 9. It was the object of divine promises, “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness” (Isa 1:27), “The Redeemer shall come to Zion” (Isa 59:20), “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified” (Isa 61:3). 10. It was the place of His throne, “The LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever” (Mic 4:7).

Thus, “Zion” was very frequently a name given by God to His true church in Old Testament times and therefore was it also a blessed *type* of His church in New Testament times. As Hebrews 12:22 declares, *we* “are come unto mount Zion” which means that Christians are interested in (have a title to) all the privileges which God made to her. Now it is obvious that we have *not* come unto any earthly or material “Zion,” but we *have* unto those *spiritual* realities and blessings of which she was the emblem. How unspeakably solemn that *this* is the very thing which the “dispensationalists” so emphatically deny, yea, hold up to ridicule. They, in their blindness, see nothing more in all those Old Testament passages than something which is *Jewish*. 1 Peter 2:5-6 plainly bursts their empty bubble, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, *I lay in Zion* a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”

Before passing from Hebrews 12:22-23, let it be pointed out that “mount Zion,” the “city of the living God,” and “the heavenly Jerusalem,” are three names for the same thing. In Psalm 46:4, we read, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High,” and Psalm 48:1-2 identifies “the city of God” with “Zion,” “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion.” So also does Psalm

87:2-3, “The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, *O city of God*.” This figure of the “city” is also contrastive from Israel at Sinai, *in the wilderness*, where they had neither rest nor refuge. In a city there is order, defense, safety.

The church is called the “City of God,” first, because He is its Builder. Second, because He indwells it. Third, because it is under His sovereign rule. It is there He disposes of His children into a spiritual society. Carefully note how this same figure is used in Ephesians 2:19, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellowcitizens* with the saints.” The church is called the “heavenly Jerusalem,” first, because its concerns are not of this world. Second, because most of its inhabitants are already there. Third, because our citizenship (Phi 3:20) and inheritance is there. Let the reader grasp firmly this fact that, whatever is spoken of the “city of God” or of “Jerusalem” in the Old Testament *that is spiritual*, that contains in it the love and free favour of God, is *all* made OURS, and is for faith to appropriate and enjoy.

## A FAITHFUL WORD

The present article is a letter which was written by a minister of the gospel to a gentleman of high repute in religion at New York:

Dear Sir. As you in your letter manifest a great deal of candour and openness of mind, I, in making a reply, will use great plainness of speech and will, at the same time, hope that the Lord may seal instruction on your heart. It may be you are all that you say you are and a great deal more. You may also perform all that you say you do and yet fall vastly short of being a Christian in heart. You may, as it seems you are, be a member of a church; be in high esteem among professors of religion, concerning which you speak with emphasis; be thought well of by your minister, which you appear to glory in; be much applauded for your zeal and diligence, which seems a sweet morsel to you; possess a good talent for exhortation, respecting which you throw out some broad hints; but alas! know you not, my good sir, that all of the above things may be true, and yet you remain a total stranger to the *power of God* and to a *radical change of heart*. Believe me when I say that you may attend public service constantly, pray frequently, and read continually, and yet, as to spiritual things, be as blind as a bat and as dead as a stone. Real religion, sir, and vital godliness, are something more than all this and I am sorry to find your letter savours so much of the former, and nothing of the latter.

You seem to make a great bustle and noise, but what does it all amount to, when properly dissected and squared by the Word of God? Why, to me it appears like a puff of empty air. I do not write these lines, sir, to discourage you, but to correct you wherein I conceive you miss the mark in matters of the highest importance. I hope I shall not be thought to trespass when I say, if you have not had the fountain of sin in your heart broken up; if you have not discovered and felt the wrath of God in His holy law going out against you as a sinner; if you have not found yourself under the arrests of divine justice and thereby exposed to eternal ruin; if you have not had that sound sense of your lost condition which has made you flee from the wrath to come; if you have



not had the knowledge of salvation, by the forgiveness of your sins, communicated by the Holy Spirit; if Christ has not been formed in your heart the hope of glory; if you have not laid hold on eternal life; if you have not hungered and thirsted after divine instruction, under a feeling sense of gross darkness upon you, and be desirous of knowing more of Christ Jesus by the Spirit's testimony of Him, whom to know is life eternal; if you have not been made, in some degree, sick of sin, sick of self, sick of this world, and willing to part with and leave all for Christ; if these things, I say, have not in some measure taken place and been experimentally known by you, your hope is fallacious, your peace is a false peace, your faith is fantastical, your joy is delusive, your knowledge is speculative, your love of God is feigned, your fear is servile, your change of heart is mere notion, your religion is vain, and you are yet in your sins, notwithstanding all the great outcry you are now making about religion.

Real Christianity, sir, consists in something more than mere notion or whim. It is not what a man may think he is, but what God has actually made him to be, by an act of mere mercy and grace that constitutes him a true disciple of Christ. Not a few in this our day are, it is to be feared, setting themselves down satisfied, as I fear you are, under an impression that all is right between God and their souls, merely because they are well enough thought of to be taken into church fellowship and some other outside things, such, I mean, as you lay so much stress upon in your letter. O sad mistake! A most awful delusion is this, which a day that is quickly coming will disclose and make known, and then how grievously will they be surprised and astonished who have made lies their refuge, falsehood their covering, and an arm of flesh their support. I wish that you, dear sir, may not prove to be one of this sort. I shall, however, have just cause to fear it until you can give a better account of yourself than you have hitherto done.

Your state, sir, in the sight of God, is not bettered by you joining a church, though you fondly imagine it is. Permit me to say, that if your heart is not right in the sight of God, which it cannot be unless God Himself sets it right, it matters not what outward show you may make, or what people may think or say of you. *It is Christ in the heart*, "the hope of glory," that constitutes a real Christian, whereas, the name of Christ in a mere notion of Him will avail nothing at all in the day of trial or on a death-bed. Many have known enough of Christ, of themselves, of the law of God, and the Gospel of His Son, of the plan of salvation, and of the stability of the covenant of grace, *in the theory*, to get themselves a great name among men and a high station in a church for many years. And yet, when they have been summoned to appear in another world, have found themselves totally destitute of that which alone can make a dying bed easy. There was but one leper out of ten that returned to give glory to God and he was a stranger, a poor Samaritan (Luk 17:18). And so it often happens among the great crowd who make a profession of religion and become members of churches. It is only now and then a poor stranger that comes in for the blessings of the Gospel and he is generally looked upon by graceless professors as a Samaritan, and as one in nowise friendly to them. When the Lord singles out one for Himself from the company of graceless professors, and opens his ears to discipline, opens his heart to receive the truth, opens his eyes to see wondrous things out of His law, and opens his mouth to show forth His praise, such a one will speak of what he has known, felt, handled, and tasted of the Word of Life, and as he can very generally tell a hypocrite from a real saint, he will take the liberty of pointing him out. And as he also knows truth from error, he will receive the former, and reject the latter, though the latter proceed from a clergyman. But as such proceedings will be sure to prove very offensive to those who have only a name to live, *his* name will soon be cast out as evil, and he will be viewed as a pestilent fellow, and as one who is trying to turn their churches upside

down, whereas he is only endeavouring to undeceive those who are deceiving themselves and others.

I do not write thus, sir, with a view of discouraging you from attending to that which is good, but to caution you against wolves in sheep's' clothing and against trusting in a name to live, while, it may be you are dead. Man is naturally prone to fly to a false refuge and to content himself with a false peace. This is like Zoar, "near to flee to," (See Gen 19:20-22) and it is one of the hardest things in the world to persuade a man that *his* hope is delusive. And yet I am convinced if God should stir up his wrath against a man who is in a delusion, however confident he may be of the safety of his state, it would cause his beauty to fade like a leaf. And if this, sir, should take place in your experience, it is more than twenty to one with me that you would cut a very different figure from what you now expect. O sir, try to think how astonished you would stand in case your present certainty of salvation were overturned and brought to nought, and your confidence rejected! It is surprising to think, and impossible to tell, how the burning wrath of God revealed in a broken law, and sent home with full force to the conscience, does scorch, wither, consume, and burn up a man's false faith, false hope, false joy, and false peace. It is evident from the oracles of God that none will be able to stand with peace and composure in the day of the Lord's wrath, but those who have their anchorage in Christ Jesus, having fled for refuge to lay hold of that blessed hope set before us in the Gospel. All false props, sir, will in that day totter, sink, and fall under the man who leans upon them and the guilty soul thus left will be exposed to all the curses contained in the Book of the law. A mere form of religion, an outward show in the flesh, will then put off its flattering charms, and appear in its true garb. O if men were duly sensible of this, they would not dream of taking rest in such outside things as they now do.

Believe me, dear sir, it is not an outward profession of religion, but an inward possession of the grace of God, that constitutes a Christian. Not knowledge in the head, but the root of the matter in the soul that ensures eternal life to us. Not what a man says, but what he feels that proves that he has got divine life in his inward part. Not what he does for God, but what God has done for him that makes him meet for heaven. It is not fancy, but faith, which purifies the heart. Not a vain confidence, but a good hope through grace, which keeps and bears up the soul in the day of evil. Not the esteem of men, but the approbation of God, which brings peace to the troubled conscience. Not being united to a church here below, but being one with Christ, the true and living vine, that makes our standing eternally secure. Not the natural passions stirred up, but the oil of joy poured into the soul, that makes a man forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. Not partaking of bread and wine at the Lord's table, but feeding on Christ by faith, that makes him thrive and grow. It is not a blind zeal, but a zeal according to knowledge derived from the Spirit's teaching and testimony of Christ in a man's understanding and conscience that makes him approved of God. It is not what we may be thought of by those around us, but what God's thoughts toward us are that will be the turning point and decide our case when death comes. These things, it may be, will greatly astonish you, but as sure as there is a God, they are the things on which eternal salvation hangs. Look to it, therefore, and do not trifle with or think lightly of things of such vast moment. For if you do, it may prove to your cost in a day yet to come. If our names are not found written among the living in the spiritual Jerusalem, we shall be cast out as withered branches, let us attain to what place of honour and greatness we may in the church below. As to your being in good standing among professors, that is but a small matter when compared with some other things, and how a man of your sense and reading can be so exalted and enthusiastically carried away with such little things, I cannot account for in any other way than by this rule, "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). Should God be pleased, in the multitude of His tender mercies, to open your eyes and bring you to see things as they really are, you will look back on your present state with amazement and horror, seeing it to be as perilous as I now conceive it to be.

Dear sir, do turn these things over in your mind and search closely into your standing before the Lord, and be not deceived, for God is not mocked. I would advise you to read the Bible very attentively and earnestly to beg of God to set you right if you are wrong, as it is greatly to be feared you are. Pay less regard to the good opinion that men may have of you, as they will not be your judges in the great day of account. Remember, God will be the righteous Judge at that day and that by *His* decision you will stand or fall. Consider also how many have been deceived in the end about the business of salvation and the goodness of their state, though they seem to before possess an unshaken confidence of their being right. Examine well the ground of your present hope, the foundation of your faith, and what authority you have to draw a determined conclusion that your heart is right in the sight of God. Bear with me while I once more say that I stand in doubt of you and that I can see no just reason on the face of your letter for you to conclude, as you now do, that your condition in the sight of God is good. This, however, I know, God is able to do great things for you and I know not but He will, and perhaps He is at work with you now. If this should be the case, the work will go on and be brought to perfection, and you will have cause to admire His grace and to be thankful for His unspeakable mercy. Seek for these things, my dear sir, with all diligence and God grant you a successful issue. With regard to myself, I must needs say, that the esteem and good will of men, even of spiritual men, have but little weight with me. Yea, no weight at all in reference to my standing before God. I am constrained to look to a much higher source for a foundation on which to venture my immortal part. Nothing short of a believing view of Christ as crucified for me and the witness of the Holy Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God, will carry me ascendant over fears and doubts whether all is right or not. And inasmuch as nothing short of these things will satisfy my own soul, I must still doubt the safety of those who are contenting themselves with such things of so trifling a nature as you appear to do. It may be that my great plainness will give offence, but I must risk that. Write again, sir, whenever you think proper. Adieu. J. Osbourne, 1843.

## VILE!

We are rather afraid that its title will deter some from reading this article. We hope it will not be so. True, it does not treat of a popular theme, nay, one which is now very rarely heard in the pulpit, nevertheless, it is a scriptural one. Fallen man *is* “vile,” *so* vile that it has been rightly said, “He is half brute, half devil.” Nor does such a description exceed the truth. Man is “born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12) and he is “taken captive by him [the devil] at his will” (2Ti 2:26). Perhaps the reader is ready to reply, “Ah, that is man in his unregenerate state, but it is far otherwise with the regenerate.” From one viewpoint that is true; from another, it is not so.

Did not the Psalmist acknowledge, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was *as a beast* before thee” (Psa 73:22)—unteachable, untractable, kicking against God’s providential dealings, not behaving like a man, much less like a saint! Again, did not Agur confess, “Surely I am *more brutish* than any man” (Pro 30:2). True, we never hear such lamentations as these from those who claim to have received their “Pentecost” or “second blessing,” nor from those who boast they are living “the victorious life.” But to those who are painfully conscious of the “plague” of their own heart, such words may often describe their case. Only recently we received a letter from a dear brother in Christ, saying, “The vanity and corruption that I find within, which refuses to be kept in subjection, is so strong at times that it makes me cry out ‘my wounds do stink and are corrupt’.”

Does the reader object against *our* appropriation of the Psalms and Proverbs, and say, “We in this New Testament dispensation occupy much higher ground than those did.” Probably you have often been told so by men, but are you sure of it from the Word of God? Listen, then, to the groan of an eminent Christian, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom 7:14). Do you never feel *thus*, my reader? Then we are sincerely sorry for you. As to the other part of the description of fallen man, “half devil,” did not Christ say to regenerate Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me” (Mat 16:23)? And are there not times when writer and reader fully merit the same reproof? Speaking for myself, I bow my head with shame, and say, “Alas there is.”

“Behold, I am vile” (Job 40:4). This was not said by Cain in a remorseful moment after his murder of Abel, nor by Judas after he had betrayed the Saviour into the hands of His enemies. Instead, it was the utterance of one of whom God said, “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect [sincere] and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8). Was Job’s language the effect of extreme melancholy, induced by his terrible afflictions? If not, was he justified in using such strong language of self-deprecation? If he was, are Christians today warranted in echoing the same?

In order to arrive at the correct answer to the above questions, let us ask another. *When* was it that Job said, “Behold, I am vile”? Was it when he first received tidings of his heavy losses? No, for then he exclaimed, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). Was it when his friends reasoned with and reproved him? No, for then he vindicated himself and boasted of his goodness. Then *when* was it that Job declared, “Behold, I am vile”? It was when the Lord appeared to him and gave him a startling revelation of His own wondrous perfections! It was when he stood in the all-penetrating light of God’s immaculate holiness and was made to realize something of His mighty power.

Ah, when a soul is truly brought into the presence of the living God, boasting ceases, our comeliness is turned into corruption (Dan 10:8), and we cry, “Woe is me! for I am undone” (Isa 6:5). When God makes to the soul a personal revelation of His wondrous perfections, that individual is effectually convinced of his own wretchedness. The more we are given to discern the ineffable glory of the Lord, the more will our self-complacency wither. It is in God’s light, and in that only, “We see light” (Psa 36:9). When He shines into our understandings and hearts, and brings to light “the hidden things of darkness” (1Co 4:5), we perceive the utter corruption of our nature and are abominable in our own eyes. While we measure ourselves by our fellows, we shall, most likely, think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Rom 12:3), but when we measure ourselves by the holy requirements of God’s nature, we cry I “am but dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27). True repentance changes a man’s opinion of himself.

Is, then, a Christian today warranted in saying, “Behold, I am vile”? Not as faith views himself united to the One who is “altogether lovely,” but as faith discerns, in the light of the Word, what

he is by nature, what he is in and of himself, he may. Not that he is to hypocritically adopt such language in order to gain the reputation of great humility. Nay, such an utterance is *only* to be found upon our lips as it is *the feeling expression* of our hearts, particularly is it to be owned before God, when we come to Him in contrition and in confession. Yet is it also to be acknowledged before the saints, even as the apostle Paul cried publicly, “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom 7:24). It is part of our testimony to own (before those who fear the Lord) what God has revealed to us.

“Behold, I am vile.” Such is the candid and sorrowful confession of the writer. I am vile *in my imaginations*. O what scum rises to the surface when lusts boil within me. What filthy pictures are visioned in “the chambers of his imagery” (Eze 8:12). What unlawful desires run riot within. Yes, even when engaged in meditating upon the holy things of God, the mind wanders and the fancy becomes engaged with what is foul and fetid. How often does the writer have to acknowledge before God that “from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness” in him, “but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores” (Isa 1:6). Nightly does he avail himself of that fountain which has been opened “for sin *and for uncleanness*” (Zec 13:1).

2. I am vile *in my self-will*. How fretful am I when God blows upon my plans and thwarts my desires. What surgings of rebellion within my wicked breast when God’s providences displease. Instead of lying placidly as clay in the Potter’s hand, how often do I act like the restive colt, which rears and kicks, refusing to be held in with bit and bridle, determined to have my own way. Alas, alas, how very little have I learned of Him who was “meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29). Instead of “the flesh” in me being purified, it has putrefied. Instead of its resistance to the spirit weakening, it appears to be stronger each year. O that I had the wings of a dove, that I could fly away *from myself*.

3. I am vile *in my religious pretences*. How often I am anxious to make “a fair show in the flesh” and be thought highly of by others. What hypocrisies have I been guilty of in seeking to gain a reputation for spirituality. How frequently have I conveyed false impressions to others, making them suppose it was far otherwise within me, than was actually the case. What pride and self-righteousness have swayed me. And of what insincerity have I, at times, been guilty of in the pulpit. Praying to the ears of the congregation instead of to God, pretending to have liberty when my own spirit was bound, speaking of those things which I had not first felt and handled for myself. Much, very much cause has the writer to take the leper’s place, cover his lips, and cry “Unclean, unclean”!

4. I am vile *in my unbelief*. How often am I still filled with doubts and misgivings. How often do I lean unto my own understanding instead of upon the Lord. How often do I fail to expect from God (Mar 11:24) the things for which I ask Him. When the hour of testing comes, only too frequently are past deliverances forgotten. When troubles assail, instead of looking off unto the things unseen, I am occupied with the difficulties before me. Instead of remembering that with God all things are possible, I am ready to say, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” (Psa 78:19). True it is not always thus, for the Holy Spirit graciously keeps alive the faith which He has placed within, but when *He* ceases to work, and a trial is faced, how often did I give my Master occasion to say, “How is it that ye have no faith?” (Mar 4:40).

Reader, how closely does your experience correspond with the above? Is it true that, “As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man” (Pro 27:19)? Have we been describing some of the symptoms of your diseased heart? Have you ever owned before God, “Behold I am vile”? Do you bear witness to the humbling fact before your brethren and sisters in Christ? It is comparatively easy to *utter* such words, but do you *feel* them? Does the realization of this truth

make you “blush” (Ezr 9:6) and groan in secret? Have you such a personal and painful sense of your vileness that, often, you feel thoroughly unfit to draw nigh unto a holy God? If so:

1. You have abundant cause *to be thankful to God* that His Holy Spirit has shown you something of your wretched self, that He has not kept you in ignorance of your woeful state, that He has not left you in that gross spiritual darkness that enshrouds millions of professing Christians. Ah my stricken brother, if you are groaning over the ocean of corruption within and feel utterly unworthy to take the sacred name of Christ upon your polluted lips, then you should be unfeignedly thankful that you belong not to that great multitude of self-complacent and self-righteous religionists of whom it is written, “They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down” (Jer 8:12). Much cause have you to praise the God of all grace that He anointed *your* sin-blinded eyes, and that now, in His sight, you are able to see a little of your hideous deformities, and cry “I am black” (Song 1:5).

2. You have abundant cause *to walk softly before God*. Must not the realization of our vileness truly humble us before Him, make us smite upon our breast, and cry, “God be merciful to me, the sinner!” Yes, such a prayer is as suited to the maturest saint as it was when first convicted of his lost estate, for he is *to continue as he began*, Colossians 2:6, Revelation 2:5. But alas, how quickly does the apprehension of our vileness leave us! How frequently does pride again dominate us. For this reason we are bidden to, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to *the hole of the pit* whence ye are digged” (Isa 51:1). Beg God to daily show you your vileness that you may walk humbly before Him.

3. You have abundant cause *to marvel at the surpassing love of the Triune God* toward you. That the Eternal Three should have set Their heart upon such a wretch is indeed the wonder of all wonders. That God the Father should foreknow and foresee every sin of which you would be guilty in thought and word and deed, and yet have loved thee “with an everlasting love” must indeed fill you with astonishment. That God the Son should have laid aside the robes of His glory and be made in the likeness of sin’s flesh, in order to redeem one so foul and filthy as I, was truly a love “that passeth knowledge” (Eph 3:19). That God the Holy Spirit should take up His residence and dwell in the heart of one so vile, only proves that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6).

## PRACTICAL GODLINESS

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jam 1:22). It is much, very much to be thankful for, when the Holy Spirit has illumined a man’s understanding, dispersed the mists of error, and established him in the truth. Yet *that* is only the beginning. The Holy Scriptures are “profitable” not only for “doctrine,” but also “for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Ti 3:16). Observe well the order there. Before we are ready to be

instructed “in righteousness” (right doing), there is much in our lives that God “reproves,” and which *we* must “correct.” Necessarily so, for before conversion, *everything* in our lives *was wrong!* For all we did was for the gratifying of self, with no thought or concern for God’s honour and glory. Therefore, the first great need and the primary duty of every young convert is *not* to study the Old Testament types or puzzle his brains over prophecy, but to diligently search the Scriptures in order to find out what is pleasing and displeasing to God, what He forbids, and what He commands.

If you have been genuinely converted, then your first concern must be to form all the details of your life—in the home, in the church, in the world—*so as to please God*. And in the actual bringing of this to pass, the order will be “cease to do evil; learn to do well” (Isa 1:16-17); “Depart from evil, and do good” (Psa 34:14 and cf. 37:27). There has to be a breaking down, before there can be a building up (Ecc 3:3). There has to be an emptying of self, before there is the filling of the Spirit. There has to be an unlearning, before there is a true learning. And there has to be a hating the “evil,” before there is loving of the “good” (Amo 5:15 and cf. Rom 12:9).

Now the extent the young Christian *does* use the Holy Scriptures in a practical way, regulating his thoughts, desires, and actions by their warnings and encouragements, their prohibitions and precepts, will very largely determine the measure in which he will enjoy God’s *blessing* on his life. As the moral Governor of this world, God takes note of our conduct and sooner or later manifests His displeasure against our sins, and His approval of a righteous walk, by granting that measure of prosperity which is most for our good and His glory. In the keeping of His commandments “there is great reward” (Psa 19:11), in *this* life (1Ti 4:8). O how much spiritual and temporal blessing most Christians miss through careless and disobedient conduct, see Isaiah 48:18!

The tragic thing is that instead of the average young Christian diligently studying God’s word so as to discover all the details of the divine will for him, he does almost anything and everything else. Many a one engages in “personal work” or some form of Christian “service,” while *his own* life remains full of things *displeasing to God!* The presence of those displeasing things in his life hinders God’s blessing upon his soul, body, and temporal affairs, and to him it has to be said, “Your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer 5:25). God’s word to His people is, “Work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12). But O how little of this “fear and trembling” is to be found anywhere today! Instead, there is self-esteem, self-confidence, boasting, and carnal security.

There are others who give themselves unto the diligent study of doctrine, but generally, they fail to realize that the doctrine of Scripture is not a series of intellectual propositions, but is “the doctrine which is *according to godliness*” (1Ti 6:3). The “doctrine” or “teaching” of God’s holy Word is given not for the instruction of our brains, but for the regulation of all the details of our daily lives, and this in order that we “may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Ti 2:10). But *that* can only be realized by a constant reading of the Word with one dominant purpose—to discover *what* God forbids and *what* He commands, by our meditating frequently on what we have read, and by fervent prayer for supernatural grace to enable us to obey.

If the young convert does not early form the habit of treading the path of practical obedience to God, then he will not have His ear when he prays! 1 John 3:22 states plainly one of the main conditions which we must constantly seek grace to heed, if our petitions are to meet with acceptance, “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” But if instead of submitting unto God’s holy requirements, we follow our own inclinations, then it will be said, “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). This is unspeakably solemn. O what a difference it makes whether or not we have experimental access to God!

Not only does the young Christian, by following a course of self-pleasing, reduce his prayers to empty words, but he brings down upon himself the rod of God and everything goes wrong in his life. That is one reason why, in these hard times, many Christians are suffering just as sorely as the poor worldlings are. *God is displeased with their ways* and does not show Himself strong on their behalf (2Ch 16:9). In this connection, reread “Sound the Alarm” and “Not Ashamed” in the March and April issues. There we have sought to point out the remedy, which calls for *real* heart-humbling before the Lord, godly sorrow, true repentance, unsparing confession, the firm determination to reform our ways, and *then* (and not before) faith’s counting on God’s mercy and a patient expectation that He will work wonders for us if we now tread the path of full submission to Him.

*(The above is the substance of a letter [revised] recently sent to a young brother, who [alas] has had no teaching along the lines of practical godliness, and who is now in sore straits.)*

## REPENTANCE

To His servants Christ gave commandment “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:47). “Beginning at Jerusalem” not because of any dispensational reason, but because grace would commence with the most unlikely and unworthy ones. But O how little repentance is being preached today, even by those claiming to be the true servants of God. “Believe, believe, only believe” is being sounded forth widely, but where is the voice now being lifted up in the wilderness crying, “Repent ye”? Are not the claims of God to be pressed upon men, and their utter and awful failure to meet those claims, *before* we tell them of His grace? And what are the claims of God upon every human creature? Are they not summed up in, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart.” Is He not entitled to this? Can He ever demand less? Is He not infinitely worthy of being loved? And is not that love to be expressed by obedience, by complete subjection to Him, by seeking to please Him in all things? And is not the failure of fallen man to meet this righteous demand of God that which constitutes the very “sinfulness of sin”? Is it not that, so far from having been in subjection to God’s will and having sought His pleasure, man has turned aside to his own way and sought only to please himself? And is it not the first duty of God’s servants to expound and explain this solemn fact, pressing it on the consciences of their hearers?

Does not the Old Testament precede the New? Does not the ministry of John the Baptist precede that of Christ? Does not Romans 1:18 to 3:20 precede Romans 3:21-26? Does not repentance toward God precede faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? Certainly it does, but where does it do so in the preaching of present-day evangelists? None can truly believe in Christ till their hearts are broken before God through a deep realization of the awfulness of their condition in His sight. The ground must be plowed before it can receive the seed. To preach the finished



work of Christ to those who have little or no realization of their awful condition before Him—that is, the consciousness that the whole of their life has consisted of self-pleasing, to the utterly ignoring of God—is only to cast pearls before swine. And what will be the effect? What *is* the effect the world over? This—those who have never been convicted by the Holy Spirit will cordially assent to the letter of the Gospel, receive the Word with joy, accept Christ as their personal Saviour, and go to swell the crowd of those having a form of godliness, but who are total strangers to a supernatural, conscience-plowing, contrite heart-giving, and transforming power. Proverbs 28:13, Isaiah 55:7, Acts 3:19 are just as much a part of God’s Word as is John 3:16, yet none would ever discover it from what he now hears, even in the Gospel halls. O my brethren in the ministry, preach *repentance* if you would honor God, discharge your responsibility, and be faithful unto the souls of your hearers. Suppose it makes you to be unpopular? What of that if you receive *Christ’s* well done in that day!

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*There is no way left but this; fair means, as we say, will not do; good words, a glorious gospel, entreatings, beseeching with blood and tears, will not do. Men are resolved to put God to the utmost of it; if He will have them, He must fetch them, follow them, catch them, lame them; yea, break their bones, or else He will not save them. Some men think an invitation, an outward call, a rational discourse will do; but they are much deceived. There must be a Power, an exceeding great and mighty Power attending the Word, or it works not effectually to the salvation of the soul. I know that these things leave men without excuse; but they are not enough to bring men home to God. Sin has hold of them; they have sold themselves to it; the power of the devil has hold of them, they are his captives at his will; yea, and more than all this, their will is one with sin, and with the devil, to be held captive thereby; and if God gives not contrition, repentance, or a broken heart for sin, there will not be, no, not so much as a mind in man, to forsake this so horrible a confederacy and plot against his soul (John Bunyan, 1628-1688).*

# December

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 12. The Advent of the Spirit (Part 4)

Unto the apostles whom He had chosen, the risen Saviour “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father,” assuring them that “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Act 1:2, 4, 8). Accordingly we read that, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Act 2:1). Their unity of mind evidently looked back to the Lord’s command and promise, and their trustful expectancy of the fulfillment thereof. The Jewish “day” was from sunset unto the following sunset and as what took place here in Acts 2 occurred during the early hours of the morning—probably soon after sunrise—we are told that the day of Pentecost was “fully come.”

The outward marks of the Spirit’s advent were three in number—the “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” (Act 2:2), the “cloven tongues like as of fire” (Act 2:3), and the speaking “with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Act 2:4). Concerning the precise signification of these phenomena and the particular bearing of them on us today, there has been wide difference of opinion, especially during the past thirty years. Inasmuch as God Himself has not seen fit to furnish us with a full and detailed explanation of them, it behooves all interpreters to speak with reserve and reverence. According to our own measure of light, we shall endeavour to briefly point out some of those things which appear to be most obvious.

First, the “rushing mighty wind,” which filled all the house, was the *collective* sign in which apparently all the hundred and twenty of Acts 1:15 shared. This was an emblem of the invincible energy with which the third Person of the Trinity works upon the hearts of men, bearing down all opposition before Him, in a manner which cannot be explained (Joh 3:8), but which is at once apparent by the effects produced. Just as the course of a hurricane may be clearly traced after it has passed, so the transforming work of the Spirit in regeneration is made unmistakably manifest unto all who have eyes to see spiritual things.

Second, “There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them” (Act 2:3), that is, upon the twelve and upon them alone. The proof of this is conclusive. First, it was to the apostles only that the Lord spoke in Luke 24:49. Second, to them only did He, by the Spirit, give commandments after His resurrection (Act 1:2). Third, to them only did He

give the promise of Acts 1:8. Fourth, at the end of Acts 1 (v. 26), we read, “He (Matthias) was numbered with *the eleven apostles*.” Acts 2 opens with “And” connecting it with 1:26 and says, “They [the twelve] were all with one accord in one place” and on *them* the Spirit now “sat” (Act 2:3). Fifth, when the astonished multitude came together, they exclaimed, “Are not *all* these which speak *Galileans*?” (Act 2:7), namely, the “men [Greek, “males”] *of Galilee*” of 1:11! Sixth, in Acts 2:14-15, we read, “But Peter, standing up *with the eleven*, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For *these* are not drunken”—the word “these” can only refer to the “eleven” standing up with Peter!

These “cloven tongues like as of fire” which descended upon the apostles was the *individual* sign, the divine credential that they were the authorized ambassadors of the enthroned Lamb. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a baptism of *fire*. “‘Our God is a consuming fire.’ The elect sign of His presence is the fire unkindled of earth, and the chosen symbol of His approval is the sacred flame: covenant and sacrifice, sanctuary and dispensation, were sanctified and approved by the descent of fire. ‘The God that answereth by fire, let him be God’ (1Ki 18:24). That is the final and universal test of deity. Jesus Christ came to bring fire on the earth. The symbol of Christianity is not a cross, but a tongue of fire” (Samuel Chadwick, 1860-1932).

Third, the apostles “speaking with other tongues” was a *public* sign. 1 Corinthians 14:22 declares, “Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not,” and as the previous verse (where Isaiah 28:11 is quoted) so plainly shows, they were a sign unto *unbelieving Israel*. A striking illustration and proof of this is found in Acts 11, where Peter sought to convince his skeptical brethren in Jerusalem that God’s grace was now flowing forth into the Gentiles. It was his description of the Holy Spirit’s falling upon Cornelius and his household (Act 11:15-18 and cf. 10:45, 56) which convinced them. It is highly significant that the Pentecostal type of Leviticus 23:22 divided the harvest into three degrees and stages—the “reaping” or *main* part, corresponding to Acts 2 at Jerusalem; the “corners of the field” corresponding to Acts 10 at “Caesarea Philippi,” which was in a corner of Palestine; and the “gleaning” for “the stranger,” corresponding to Acts 19 at Gentile Ephesus! These were the only three occasions of “tongues” recorded in Acts.

It is well known to some of our readers that during the last generation many earnest souls have been deeply exercised by what is known as “the Pentecostal movement,” and the question is frequently raised as to whether or not the strange power displayed in their meetings, issuing in unintelligible sounds called “tongues,” is the genuine gift of the Spirit. Those who have joined the movement—some of them godly souls, we believe—insist that not only is the gift genuine, but it is the duty of all Christians to seek the same. But surely such seem to overlook the fact that it was not any “*unknown* tongue” which was spoken by the apostles. Foreigners who heard them had no difficulty in understanding what was said (Act 2:8).

If what has just been said be not sufficient, then let our appeal be unto 2 Timothy 3:16-17. God has now *fully* revealed His mind to us. All that we need to “*thoroughly* furnish” us “unto *all* good works” is already in our hands! Personally the writer would not take the trouble to walk into the next room to hear any person deliver a message which he claimed was inspired by the Holy Spirit. With the *completed* Scriptures in our possession, nothing more is required except for the Spirit to interpret and apply them. Let it also be duly observed that there is not a single exhortation in all the epistles of the New Testament that the saints should seek “a fresh Pentecost,” no, not even to the carnal Corinthians or the legal Galatians.

As a sample of what was believed by the early “fathers,” we quote the following, “Augustine saith, ‘Miracles were once necessary to make the world believe the Gospel, but he who now seeks a sign that he may believe, is a wonder, yea a monster.’ Chrysostom concludeth upon the same grounds that, ‘There is now in the Church no necessity of working miracles,’ and calls him ‘a false prophet’ who now takes in hand to work them” (From William Perkins, 1604).

In Acts 2:16, we find Peter was moved by God to give a general explanation of the great wonders which had just taken place. Jerusalem was, at this time of the feast, filled with a great concourse of people. The sudden sound from heaven “as of a rushing mighty wind,” filling the house where the apostles were gathered together, soon drew thither a multitude of people, and as they, in wonderment, heard the apostles speak in their own varied languages, they asked, “What meaneth *this*?” (Act 2:12). Peter then declared, “*This* is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Act 2:16). The prophecy given by Joel (Joe 2:28-32) now began to receive its fulfillment, the latter part of which we believe is to be understood symbolically.

And what is the bearing of all this upon us today? We will reply in a single sentence—The advent of the Spirit *followed the exaltation of Christ*. If then we desire to enjoy more of the Spirit’s power and blessing, we must give Christ the throne of our hearts and crown Him the Lord of our lives.

(N.B. Having dwelt upon the doctrinal and dispensational aspects of our subject, next year (D.V.), we hope to take up the “practical” and “experimental” bearings of it.)

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 72. The Faith of Moses (Continued) (11:25-27)

“The person here instanced in as one that lived by faith, is Moses. And an eminent instance it is to his purpose, especially in his dealing with the Hebrews, and that on sundry accounts. 1. Of his person. None was ever in the old world more signalized by Providence in his birth, education, and actions, than he was. Hence his renown was both then, and in all ages after, very great in the world. The report and estimation of his acts and wisdom were famous among all the nations of the earth. Yet this person lived and acted, and did all his works *by faith*. 2. Of his great work, which was the typical redemption of the church. A work it was—great in itself—so God expresseth it to be and such as was never wrought in the earth before (Deu 4:32-34). Yet greater in the typical respect which it had to His eternal redemption of the church by Jesus Christ. 3. On the account of his office. He was the lawgiver, whence it is manifest, that *the law is not opposite to faith*, seeing the lawgiver himself lived thereby” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Each example of faith supplied by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11 presents a distinctive feature or fruit of that spiritual grace. The faith which is here described is *saving* faith, without which no man is accepted by God (see verse 6). It is true that all Christians are not given the same measure of faith, nor do all of them manifest it in the same manner. All flowers are not of the same hue, nor are they equally fragrant, yet every variety differs radically from weeds! Not every saint is

called upon to build an ark, offer up his son in sacrifice, or forsake a palace, nevertheless, there is that in the heart and life of *every* regenerate soul which plainly distinguishes him from those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and which clearly bears the mark of the *supernatural*—there is that in him which mere nature does not and cannot bring forth.

While it be true that very few Christians are called upon to leave a palace, yet everyone who would become a Christian *is required* to forsake the world—not physically, but morally. God does not bid us become hermits, or enter a convent or monastery—that is only the devil’s perversion of the truth of separation, but He *does* insist that the sinner must cast away the idols of the world, turn from its vain pleasures, cease walking in its evil ways, and set his affections upon things above. Scripture is unmistakably plain upon this point, declaring, “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). That which was adumbrated by Moses in our present passage was the heart’s renunciation of a vain and perishing world, and giving God His true place in the affections.

In our last article, we saw how Moses voluntarily relinquished his position of a nobleman in Pharaoh’s court and preferred to have fellowship with the despised and suffering people of God. In this, he was a blessed type of Him who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, who descended from the glory of heaven and was born in a manger, who laid aside His robes of majesty and took upon Him the form of a servant. And my reader, His people are predestinated “to be conformed to” *His* image (Rom 8:29). He has left them an example and there is no other route to heaven, but by “following his steps,” see John 10:4! There is a real and practical oneness between the Head and the members of His mystical body, and that practical oneness consists in *self-sacrifice*. Unless the spirit of self-sacrifice rules my heart, I am no *Christian*!

The way to heaven is a “narrow” one and the entrance to it is “strait,” and few there be that find it (Mat 7:13-14). Because that way *is* “narrow,” opposed to all the inclinations of flesh and blood, Christ bids us to “sit down and count the cost” (Luk 14:31) before we start out. The “cost” is far too high for all who have never had a miracle of grace wrought within them, for it includes the cutting off of a right hand and the plucking out of a right eye (Mat 5:29-30)—*that* is why 1 Peter 4:18 asks, “If the righteous *scarcely* be saved [or “*with difficulty* be saved”], where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” Few indeed are, like Moses, willing to pay the “cost.” Alas, the vast majority, even in Christendom, are like Esau (Heb 12:16) or the Gadarenes (Mar 5:14-15)—they prefer to indulge the flesh rather than deny it.

The *difficulty* of salvation, or the “straitness” of the gate and the “narrowness” of the way which leadeth into life, was strikingly prefigured by the alluring temptations and carnal obstacles which had to be overcome by Moses. As we pointed out in our last article, his noble decision not only involved the leaving of Pharaoh’s palace, the apparent ingratitude toward his foster-mother, the ignoring of the precedent set up by Joseph, but it also meant the throwing in his lot with a despised people, enduring all the discomforts and hardships of their wilderness wanderings, and the bringing down upon his head not only the contempt of his former associates, but having to endure the murmurings and criticisms of the Hebrews themselves. Ah, my reader, *such a choice* as Moses made was altogether contrary to flesh and blood, and can be accounted for only on the ground that a miracle of divine grace had been wrought within him. As our Lord declared, “With men *this is impossible*; but with God all things are possible” (Mat 19:26).

From what has been said above, is it not unmistakably evident that as great a distance as that which separates heaven from earth divides *Scriptural* “conversion” from that which goes under the name of “conversion” in the vast majority of the so-called “churches” today?! A genuine and

saving conversion is a radical and revolutionary experience. It is vastly more than the taking up of a sound creed, believing what the Bible says about Christ, or joining some religious assembly. It is something which strikes down to the very roots of a man's being, causing him to make an unreserved surrender of himself to the claims of God, henceforth seeking to please and glorify Him. This issues, necessarily, in a complete break from the world and the former manner of life. In other words, "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).

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb 11:24). It is the first two words of this verse which supply an adequate explanation of the noble conduct of Moses here. A God-given faith is occupied with something better than the things of sight and sense, and therefore does it discern clearly the utter vanity of worldly greatness and honour. Faith has to do *with God*, and when the mind be truly stayed upon Him, neither the riches nor the pleasures of earth can attract, still less enthrall. Faith relies upon and is obedient unto a personal revelation from on High, for "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). Moses had "heard," Moses "believed," Moses *acted on* what he had heard from God.

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb 11:25). Yes, each of us *has to choose* between life and death (Deu 30:15), between sin and holiness, between the world and Christ, between fellowship with the children of God and friendship with the children of the devil. When Moses took the part of an Israelite against an Egyptian (Exo 2), he declared plainly that he preferred the former to the latter, that the promises of God meant far more to him than the fame or luxury of an earthly court. Yet at that time, the seed of Abraham were in an exceedingly low state, nevertheless, Moses knew that the promises which God had made unto the patriarchs could not fail.

That was *faith* indeed—to willingly forego the attractive prospects which lay before him in the land of the Nile and deliberately prefer a path of hardship. What he had "heard" from God was to him so grand, so great, so glorious, that, after thoughtfully balancing the one over against the other, Moses rejected material aggrandizement for spiritual riches. He considered it to be a far higher honour to be a child of Abraham than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He might have *reasoned* that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and have "made the most of his (present) opportunity," rather than have set his heart on an unseen future, but the spirit triumphed over the flesh. O how we need to pray for grace to enable us to "approve things that are excellent," that we may be "sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phi 1:10).

It is to be duly noted that Moses elected to suffer affliction with the Hebrews not because they were his people, but because they were *God's* people. "The object of his choice was God; the One who chose his fathers, who revealed to them His truth and grace, and commanded them to walk before Him without fear; the God who was not ashamed to be called their God, and to whom he had been dedicated in his infancy" (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891). Observe that fellowship with "the people of God" necessarily involves, in some form or other, "affliction." Yes, God has ordained that "we must through much tribulation enter into his kingdom" (Act 14:22), and declares, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Ti 3:12). But *why* should this be so? Why had not God appointed a smoother path and a pleasanter lot for His high favourites while they pass through this world? We subjoin one or two of the many answers which may be returned to this question.

God has decreed that the general state of His people on earth shall be one of hardship, opposition, persecution. First, to arouse them to spiritual diligence. He has told them in His Word,

“This is not your rest” (Mic 2:10), nevertheless, there is a tendency in us to settle down here. Again and again God bids us to watch and pray, to be sober and vigilant, alert and active, but only too often His exhortations fall on deaf ears. The “wise virgins” slumbered and slept as well as the “foolish” ones (Mat 25:5), and need *awakening*, because they will not heed such calls as are found in Romans 13:11, Ephesians 5:14, etc. He uses the enemy to arouse us. Second, to wean us from the world, because there is that in us which still loves the world. God, in His mercy, often stirs them up to hate us. Third, to conform us more fully unto the image of Christ. The Head endured the contradiction of sinners *against* Himself and His body is called to have “fellowship in his sufferings” (Phi 3:10).

The “pleasures of sin” in Hebrews 11:25 has immediate reference to the riches and dignities of Pharaoh’s court, which Moses could no longer enjoy without being unfaithful to God and His people. To have gone on living in the palace would be despising Jehovah and His covenant with Abraham’s seed. It would have been preferring his own advancement and ease rather than the deliverance of his people. He would have been conducting himself as a worldling, rather than as a stranger and pilgrim in this scene, and worse, he would have been conniving at Pharaoh’s cruel treatment of the Hebrews. Moreover, to have resisted the impulse of the Spirit on his heart would have been *sin*. This shows us that things which are not sinful in themselves, become so when used or enjoyed at the wrong time. Everything is beautiful in its season. There is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh” (Ecc 3:4).

The principle we have just enunciated above is of great practical importance. Material things become snares if employed intemperately. God has granted us permission to “use” the things of this world, but has forbidden the “abuse” of them (1Co 7:31). Temporal blessings become a curse if they are allowed to hinder us from the discharge of duty. All associations must be severed which deter us from having fellowship with the saints. Personal ease and comfort are to be set aside when our brethren are “suffering affliction” and need a helping hand. Alas, only God knows how many professing Christians have continued to enjoy the *luxuries* of life, while thousands were without some of the bare *necessities* of life.

Everything which is severed from true godliness is included in this expression “the pleasures of sin.” Temporal mercies are to be enjoyed with thankfulness to God, but only so far and so long as they help to promote a true following of the example which Christ has left us. Alas, how many are seeking their happiness in the things of the flesh, rather than in the things of the Spirit. Scripture says, “Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith” (Pro 15:16)—but how few believe it! Mark it well, dear reader, the “pleasures of sin” are only for “a season,” and a solemnly brief season at that. They must end either in speedy repentance or speedy ruin. How blessed is the contrast presented in Psalm 16:11, “At thy right hand there are pleasures *for evermore!*” Is my heart set upon *them*? If so, I am making it my chief concern every day to walk along *the only path* which leads to them.

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Heb 11:26). Here the Holy Spirit mentions a third instance of Moses’ contempt of the world. First, of its honours (v. 24), then of its pleasures (v. 25), now, of its wealth. Note the emphatic gradation in the decision of Moses as intimated in the three verbs. First, he “refused” to be any longer acknowledged as the adopted son of Egypt’s princess. Second, he “chose” or deliberately elected to become identified with and throw in his lot among the despised and suffering people of God. Third, he “esteemed” the reproach this involved, as high above that which he relinquished and renounced. The same Greek word is rendered “judged” in verse 11, showing that it was no rash conclusion which he jumped to hastily, but that it was the mature consideration of his mind and

heart. Another has compared the three verbs here with Mark 4:28, “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.”

This 26th verse is an amplification of what is found in the 24th and 25th, and announces both the intelligence of Moses’ choice and the fervour of spiritual affection which prompted it. The decision that he made was not a reluctant and forced one, but ready and joyous. It was not merely he perceived that identifying himself with the Hebrews was a bounden duty, and therefore he must “make the best of a bad job” and put up with the hardships such a course entailed, but that he gladly preferred the same—*Christ* meaning infinitely more to him than everything which was to be found in Egypt. Reader, is the denying of self and taking up of the cross something which you grudgingly perform or does the “love of Christ constrain” (2Co 5:14) you thereto? Can you, in your measure, say with the apostle, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (2Co 12:10)?

What is meant here by “the reproach of Christ”? The Saviour was not born till many centuries later, true, but those whom the Father gave to Him before the foundation of the world, were, from Abel onwards, well-acquainted with Him. See John 8:56. Christ had a being before He was born of the virgin. We read of Israel “tempting Christ” in the wilderness (1Co 10:9). From the beginning, Christ was Head of the church and in His own Person led His own people, and was present in their midst, under the name of “the angel of the covenant.” Let the interested reader carefully ponder the terms of Exodus 23:20-22 and it should be plain that no *created* “angel” is there in view. Thus, whatever that people suffered, it was the reproach “of Christ,” who had taken them under His protection. There was a communion between Christ and His people, as real and as intimate as that union and communion which exists between Him and His people now. Weigh well Isaiah 63:9, Zechariah 2:8, and compare with Acts 9:4 and Matthew 25:34 and clear proof of this will be obtained.

The “reproach of Christ” (Heb 11:26). then signifies first, Christ *personally* as identified with His people. Second, it has reference to Christ *mystically*, His redeemed as one with Him in humiliation and persecution. “Christ and the church were considered from the beginning, as one mystical body; so as that what the one underwent, the other is esteemed to undergo the same” (John Owen). In marriage, the wife takes the name and status of her husband, because they have become “one flesh.” In like manner, the church is called “Christ” in 1 Corinthians 12:12 and Galatians 3:16 because of its union and communion with Him, because of the likeness and sympathy between them. Nor was this blessed mystery kept concealed—as modern “dispensationalists” wrongly declare—from the Old Testament saints, as a careful comparison of Jeremiah 23:6 with 33:16 makes very evident. Moses had “heard” from God that the Hebrews were His people and the remnant among them “according to the election of grace” were ordained to be “joint heirs with Christ,” and believing what he heard, he voluntarily and gladly decided to throw in his lot with them.

That the mystical body of Christ, the church, is in view here in Hebrews 11:26—for the Head and His members can never be separated, though they may be viewed distinctly—is abundantly clear by a careful comparison of the preceding clauses. Verses 25 and 26 are obviously parallel and explain one another. In the former, we are told that Moses “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Thus, there is a threefold parallelism—the “reproach” of verse 26 agrees with and is interpreted by the “suffering affliction” of verse 25; “the Christ” of verse 26 corresponds with and is defined by “the people of God” in verse 25; and the “treasures of Egypt” balances with and explains the “pleasures of sin for a season.”



“For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26). This was what strengthened and supported the faith of Moses. He had never forsaken the honours and comforts of the palace unless his heart had been fixed upon the eternal recompence. Faith realizes that peace of conscience is better than a big bank balance, that communion with God is infinitely to be preferred above the favours of an earthly court. Moses knew that he would be no loser by such a choice. Faith sees that nothing is lost which is quitted for Christ’s sake—though the name of Moses was removed from Egypt’s records, it has been accorded a prominent place upon the imperishable pages of Holy Writ. See here the vast difference between worldlings and saints. The former estimate things by sight, the latter by faith. The former through the coloured glass of corrupt reason and carnal sense, the latter by the light of God’s Word. Thus they wonder at each other. The worldling *thinks* the real Christian is crazy, the Christian *knows* the poor worldling is spiritually insane.

The heart of Moses was set upon something more blessed than the perishing things he was relinquishing. The “he had respect” is a compound in the Greek, and properly signifies to look from one thing to another. He looked from the things of time to those of eternity, for “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). This is one of the great properties of faith—to frequently and trustfully ponder the promise of eternal life, which we are to dwell in forever after this scene of sin is left behind. Faith perceives that the way to “save” is to “lose” (Mat 16:25), that present self-denial will yet be honoured by enrichment, knowing that if now we suffer with Christ we shall be “also glorified together” (Rom 8:17). How this condemns the practice of many who spend their lives in the greedy pursuit of the world, with no regard to God or their eternal interests, but think that if they call on Him for mercy with their last gasp, all will be well. Such people terribly deceive themselves by failing to see that eternal life is a “reward”—see Luke 1:74-75. We must labour in the works of godliness in *this* life.

That which Moses had “respect unto” is here called “the recompense of the reward.” This is the all-sufficient presence of God with His people now (Gen 15:1), and the great and final reward of eternal glory which is given by God and received by His people as a compensation for all their sufferings. This is one of the New Testament passages which proves the Old Testament saints had a much clearer understanding of the future state of the redeemed than is now commonly supposed. For the reward of good works, see Hebrews 6:10; of patience, Hebrews 6:12; of suffering, Hebrews 10:34. The calling of heaven a “reward” in nowise imports any desert on man’s part, but abundant kindness in God, who will not suffer anything to be done or endured for Christ’s sake without recompense. It is called a “reward” to encourage obedience (Psa 19:11) and allure our hearts (Mat 5:12). That a *gift* may be a “reward” is clear from Colossians 3:24. It is also called a “reward” because it is God’s *owning* of the Spirit’s work in and through His people. Since eternal glory is a “reward,” let us be patient under present suffering, Romans 8:18. It is legitimate to view the reward of heaven while serving here—not that this is to be the chief or only motive (for that would be a religion of selfishness), but as faith’s anticipation, cf. Philippians 3:8-14. The reward is “gratuitous that God hath annexed to faith and obedience, not merited or deserved by them, *but infallibly annexed* unto them in a way of sovereign bounty” (John Owen).

# THE LIFE OF DAVID

## 24. His Sore Dilemma

Following his local incursion upon and victory over the Amalekites, David, instead of quietly making for Ziklag, most imprudently “came to Achish” (1Sa 27:9). Seeing him so heavily laden with the spoils which had been taken, the king inquired where he had been. David feared to tell Achish that he had been destroying Israel’s enemies and the Philistines’ friends, and therefore returned a misleading answer. David had taken precaution to cover his tracks, for we are told that he “saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines” (1Sa 27:11). Forgetful of God and the many tokens he had already received of His protecting care, David dissembled. Achish was thoroughly deceived, for we read, “Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant forever” (1Sa 27:12).

Probably it was his persuading Jonathan to tell his father that he had gone about his business, telling Abimelech an untruth, his prevarications before Achish, and some other instances, which caused David, when later he penitently reflected upon them, to pray “Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa 119:29). This seems to have been David’s “besetting sin,” or the particular inclination of his corrupt nature. Now when we are foiled by any sin, we should take careful pains lest we settle into a “way” or course of sinning, for as a brand which has once been in the flame is now more susceptible to fire, so the committing of any sin renders us more liable to form a habit of that evil.

Humiliating as may be the acknowledgment of it, the fact remains that every one of us needs to cry fervently unto God, “Remove from me the way of lying.” Because we are descended from parents who, at the beginning, preferred the devil’s lie to God’s truth, we are strongly inclined unto lying. Yea, it is so much a part of our fallen nature that none but God can remove it from us. How many indulge in exaggeration, which is a form of lying. How many deceive by gestures and actions, which is another form of it. How many make promises (in their letters, for example, vowing they will soon write again) which they never fulfill. Worse still, how many lie unto God by false appearances—going through the form of prayer, feigning to be very pious outwardly, when their hearts and minds are upon the things of the world. Of old God said, “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit” (Hos 11:12). God sees through all vain shows, and will not be mocked.

The consequences of David’s lie soon became apparent. “And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men” (1Sa 28:1). Probably this was about the last thing he expected. Poor David! he was indeed in a tight place now, so tight that it seemed impossible for him to turn either way. On the one hand, to refuse the king’s request would not only be to run the danger of angering him, with what that would most likely entail, but would appear the height of ingratitude in return for the kindness and

protection which had been given to him and his people. On the other hand, to accept Achish's proposal meant being a traitor to Israel.

This sore dilemma in which David found himself is recorded for *our* learning. It is a solemn warning of what we may expect if we forsake the path of God's precepts. If we enter upon a wrong position, then trying and unpleasant situations are sure to arise—situations which our consciences will sharply condemn, but from which we can see no way out of. When we deviate from the path of duty, in the slightest degree, each circumstance that follows will tend to draw us further aside. Once a rock starts downhill, it gains momentum with every bound that it takes. Then how watchful we need to be against the *first* false step. Yea, how earnestly should we pray, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Psa 119:117)! Satan rests not satisfied for the Christian to yield one "little" point and knows full well our doing so greatly lessens our resistance to his next temptation.

For the sake of younger readers, let us enlarge a little more upon this point. To go anywhere we ought not will bring us into temptations that it will be almost impossible to resist. To seek the society of non-Christians is to play with fire and to accept favours from them will almost certainly result in our getting burned. To compromise one point will be followed by letting down the bars at others. For a young lady to accept the attentions of an undesirable young man makes it far harder to reject his later advances. Once you accept a favour—even if it be but a "joy-ride" in an auto—you place yourself under an obligation and though you be asked to pay a high price in return, yet if you demur, "ingratitude" is what you are likely to be charged with. Then go slowly, we beg you, in accepting favours from any, especially from those who are likely to take an unfair advantage of you.

David had done wrong in seeking protection from Saul in the land of the Philistines and now the king of Gath required service from him in return. War being determined against Israel, Achish asks the assistance of David and his men. Yes, when the Christian turns unto the world for help, he must expect to be asked to pay the world's price for the same. Needless intimacies with the avowed enemies of godliness, and the receiving favours from them, quickly reduces us to be unfaithful to God or ungrateful to our benefactors. To what a strait had the false position of David reduced him—if he promised to fight against Israel and then broke his word, he would be guilty of treachery; if he fight against Israel, he would alienate the affections of his own people and expose himself to the reproach of having slain Saul. It seemed impossible that he should extricate himself from this dilemma with a good conscience and clear reputation.

"And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do" (1Sa 28:2). Probably David was quite undecided how to act and cherished a secret hope that the Lord would help him out of his great difficulty. Yet this by no means excused him for returning an insincere and evasive answer. "And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever." (1Sa 28:2). The king of Gath understood his reply as a promise of effectual assistance and so determined to make him the captain of his bodyguard. At the time, David was too much swayed by the fear of man to refuse attendance upon Achish.

"Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city" (1Sa 28:3). This seems to be brought in for the purpose of intimating why the Philistines should make an attack upon Israel at this time. The knowledge of the prophet's death had probably emboldened them. When death has removed ministers of God, or persecution has banished them (as it had David), a land is deprived of its best defence. "And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land" (1Sa 28:3). This is mentioned as an introduction to what follows unto the end of the chapter. It serves to emphasize the

inconstancy of Saul. It illustrates the worthlessness of the temporary reformation of professors, who ultimately return to their wallowing in the mire.

“And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled” (1Sa 28:4-5). Had he been in communion with God, there would be no need for such a fear, but he had provoked the Holy One to forsake him. Saul’s excessive terror arose chiefly from a guilty conscience. His contempt of Samuel, his murdering the priests and their families, his malicious persecution of David. Probably he had a premonition that this attack of the Philistines foreboded his approaching doom.

“And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not,” (1Sa 28:6). Unspeakably solemn is this. The case of one abandoned by God. It was under urgent terror and not as a preparation for repentance, that Saul now sought unto the Lord. He did not “inquire” of Him till his doom was sealed, till it was too late, for God will not be mocked. O unsaved reader, heed that call, “Seek ye the LORD *while he may be found*, call ye upon him *while he is near*” (Isa 55:6), otherwise, God may yet say of thee, as of those of old, “These men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all *by them?*” (Eze 14:3).

“And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not” (1Sa 28:6). Some see a contradiction between this statement and what is said in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14, “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; And inquired not of the LORD.” The “literalists” of the day, those who are incapable of seeing beneath the bare letter of the Word, may well be stumbled by a comparison of the two passages, but he who is taught the *spiritual* meaning of the Scriptures perceives no difficulty. There is much that passes for “prayer” among men (when they are in great physical distress) which unto God is no more than the “howling” of beasts, see Hosea 7:14. Saul “inquired” in a hypocritical manner, which the Lord would not regard at all. The ear of the Lord is open unto none save those of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

“Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor” (1Sa 28:7). Here we behold the fearful wickedness of one who was righteously abandoned by God. Fearful presumption was it for Saul to deliberately and definitely resort unto one who practiced diabolical arts. Only a little before, he had banished from the land those who had “familiar spirits” (1Sa 28:3), known today as “mediums.” It illustrates the fact that apostates frequently commit those very sins which they once were most earnest in opposing. We shall not follow Saul through the remainder of this chapter, but pass on to the 29th, where the Holy Spirit continues the narrative about the Philistines and David.

“Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rearward with Achish” (1Sa 29:1-2). “If David had told the truth, Achish would never have dreamed of enrolling him amongst the hosts of the Philistines. It was his own contrivance that had brought him there. He, who so well knew how to discriminate between the Philistines and the armies of the living God, and who, on the ground of that distinction, had so often sought and obtained the assistance of the God of Israel, now found himself leagued with the enemies of God for the destruction of God’s people. He who had so distinctly refused to stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed, was now enrolled with those

very hosts who were about to shed the blood of Saul and of Jonathan too, upon the mountains of Gilboa. Such were the terrible circumstances in which David suddenly found himself. He seems to have looked upon them as hopeless, nor do we read of his attempting any remedy.

“But David had not ceased to be the subject of care to the great Shepherd of Israel. He had wandered and was to be brought back. The secret providence of God again interfered and separated him from the camp of the Philistines” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899). Yes, man’s extremities are (so to speak) God’s opportunities and from the dilemma which David could see no way out of, He graciously extricated him—without his having to move a finger, a door was opened for his deliverance. The means which the Lord employed upon this occasion should cause us to bow in adoration before the High Sovereign over all and deepen our trust in Him.

“Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?” (1Sa 29:3). God has various ways of delivering His people from their difficulties. While the ungodly pursue their own purposes and follow out their own plans, God secretly influences them to such determinations as subvert the good of His saints. These “princes” of the Philistines were not those of the immediate court of Achish, but lords of other principalities, who were confederates with him. These now opposed the design of Achish to use David and his men in the forthcoming battle.

“And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?” (1Sa 29:4-5). “Though God might justly have left David in his difficulty to chasten him for his folly, yet because his heart was upright with Him, He would not suffer him to be tempted above which he was able, but with the temptation made a way for his escape (1Co 10:13). A door was opened for his deliverance out of this strait. God inclined the hearts of the Philistine princes to oppose his being employed in this battle and to insist upon him being dishonored, and thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

The esteem and affection of the wicked often become snares to us, but reproaches, contempt, injurious suspicions, prove beneficial, and the ill-usage of the ungodly by which we are driven from them is much better for us than their friendship which knits us to them. “When worldly people have no evil to say to us, but will bear testimony to our uprightness, we need no more from them; and this we should aim to acquire by prudence, meekness, and a blameless life. But their *flattering* commendations are almost always purchased by improper compliances, or some measure of deception, and commonly cover us with confusion. It is seldom prudent to place great confidence in one who has changed sides, except as the fear of God influences a real convert to conscientious fidelity” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). It is striking to note the particular thing which God made use of to influence those Philistine lords against David. It was the song which the women of Israel had sung in David’s honour and which now for the third time brought him into dishonour—so little are the flatteries of people worth! They stir up jealousy and hatred in others. Yet in the hand of God, it became the instrument of David’s deliverance.

Achish now summoned David into his presence and said, “Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines” (1Sa 29:7). No doubt David secretly

rejoiced at this deliverance from his sore dilemma, yet he was unwilling that the king of Gath should know it. He prevaricated again, making an appearance of concern for being so summarily dismissed. “And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?” (1Sa 29:8). Sad it is to see the anointed of God dissembling and speaking in such a manner of His people. But Achish was not to be moved and said, “Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master’s servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart” (1Sa 29:10). Marvelous deliverance was this from his ensnaring service, yet without the slightest credit to David. It was nought but the sovereign grace of God which freed him from the snare of the fowler.

## A WARNING

### Marks of Religious Declension

1. When you are reluctant to religious conversation and the company of serious, heavenly-minded Christians, and enjoy yourself best with men of the world. 2. When from preference, you are absent from meetings for prayer, confine yourself to Sabbath meetings, are easily detained from them, and are ready to excuse such neglects. 3. When you are afraid to consider certain duties seriously, lest your conscience rebuke past neglect and insists on fidelity now. 4. When it is more your object, in doing duty, to pacify conscience, than to honour Christ, obtain spiritual profit, or do good to others. 5. When you have an over-critical spirit respecting preaching; are dissatisfied with the manner, as inelegant, too plain, too intelligent, or not according to some favourite model; or with the matter, as too doctrinal, or too perceptive; or when you complain of it as too close or are suspicious of personality. 6. When you are more afraid of being accounted strict, than of sinning against Christ by negligence, in practice, and unfaithfulness “to your Lord and Master” (Joh 13:14). 7. When you have little fear of temptations and can trifle with spiritual danger. 8. When you thirst for the complacency of men of the world, and are more anxious to know what they think or say of you, than whether you honour the Saviour in their sight. 9. When scandals to religion are more the subject of your censure, than of your secret grieving and prayer before God, and faithful endeavours for their removal. 10. When you are more afraid to encounter the scorn of an offending man, by rebuking sin, than of offending God by silence. 11. When you are more bent on being rich than holy. 12. When you cannot receive deserved reproof for faults, are unwilling to confess them, and justify yourself. 13. When you are impatient and unforbearing towards the frailties, misjudgments, and faults of others. 14. When your reading of the Bible is formal, hasty, lesson-wise, or merely intellectual, and unattended with self-application; or when you read almost any book with more interest than the Book of God. 15. When you have more religion abroad than at home; are apparently fervent when “seen of men” (Mat 23:5), but languid when seen only in the family or by God alone. 16. When your religious taste is more for the new things of men, than for the old things of the treasury of God’s Word. 17. When you call spiritual

sloth and withdrawal from Christian activity by the names of prudence and peaceableness, while sinners are going to destruction and the church suffering declension; unmindful that prudence can be united with apostolic fidelity, and peaceableness with most anxious seeking of the salvation of souls. 18. When, because there is false zeal abroad, you will neither trust yourself nor others, even in that “fervency in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11) which Paul taught and practiced. 19. When you are secretly more gratified at the falls of some professor of religion, than grieved for the wounds he inflicts upon Christ. 20. When, under chastisement of Providence, you think more of your sufferings than your deserts, and look more for relief than purification from sin. 21. When you confess, but do not forsake besetting sin. 22. When you acknowledge, but still neglect duty.

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 6. The Grace of God

“The character of God, and the great principles of His moral government, the revelation of which has been one great object of His dealings with men, have of course, been at all times the same in themselves, though the knowledge of them has been communicated to men at sundry times and in divers manners. The way in which fallen men were to be saved has been at all times the same, as it was necessarily and unchangeably determined in its substance, or fundamental provisions and arrangements, by the attributes of God, and the principles of His moral government. Of course God’s great designs with respect to the fallen race of man has been at all times the same, conducted upon the same principles and directed to the same object. The chief differences observable in God’s successive dispensations toward the human race are to be found in the *fullness* and *completeness* of the revelation which, at different times He gave of His character and plans, and especially of the method of salvation, and in the more temporary objects which at different periods He combined with His one grand terminating purpose” (William Cunningham, 1870).

Since the Fall, God’s dealings with men have been under three distinct economies—the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. In each of them, “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10) has both exercised and manifested His sovereign benignity. It is a serious mistake to suppose that divine grace is peculiar to this Christian era. It is a fundamental error to affirm that in Old Testament times God’s people were saved on some other principle than grace. Yet, through a wrong understanding of John 1:17 and Ephesians 3:2, it has been widely held that the Mosaic economy was one of *unrelieved* law, and that not until after the day of Pentecost was the grace of God made known to poor sinners. In the note appended to Matthew 28:19, the Scofield Bible says, “With the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ begins the dispensation of the grace of God (Eph 3:2), which is defined as ‘His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus’; and ‘the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast’ (Eph 2:7-9). Under grace [which Mr. S. contrasts from “under law,” the Mosaic economy] God freely gives to the believing sinner eternal life

(Rom 6:23); accounts to him a perfect righteousness (Rom 3:21-22; 4:4-5), and accords to him a perfect position.” But God gave precisely *the same* blessings unto penitent and believing sinners from Abel onwards!

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8). To appreciate the force of this, attention must be paid to the verses which precede and follow. The wickedness of man was great in the earth, so that it repented the Lord He had made man. The earth was filled with violence for “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12). Nevertheless, even in those terrible times (far, far worse than now!), there was “a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom 11:5). God had reserved unto Himself one family from being swallowed up in the general apostasy. The sovereign grace of God had singled out Noah, wrought in him a saving faith, which was evidenced by works of obedience and righteousness. It was not for anything in him, for God permitted it to appear that he was a man of like passions with us (Gen 9:21), but due alone to the free favour and will of God that Noah was delivered from the flood.

That the patriarchs were saved *by grace* is made abundantly clear from the 4th chapter of Romans. There we are told, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for [unto] righteousness” (Rom 4:2-3). Then in verse 16, we read, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be *by grace*; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of *us* all.” Nor was this blessed truth withheld from them and only made known in New Testament times. In Genesis 19:19, we read that Lot said, “Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life.” How clear was his apprehension of the unmerited favour of God. In Genesis 43:29, we find Joseph saying to Benjamin, “God be *gracious* unto thee.” Clear proof is this that he was divinely taught this precious truth.

How gloriously did God demonstrate His *grace* in delivering the descendants of Abraham from “the iron furnace.” Nowhere is His sovereign favour more blessedly displayed than in the difference He put between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, and the wonderful way in which He emancipated them from the house of bondage. No clearer type of redemption is to be met with in all the Scriptures. The sending of Moses unto an oppressed and groaning people, the protection they were afforded from the angel of death under the blood of the paschal lamb, and their deliverance at the Red Sea, unmistakably and plainly shadowed forth the Christian’s deliverance from the servitude of sin and Satan, and his security from the wrath to come, which deliverance and security he owes entirely to the grace of God manifested in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. So too it was grace, *wondrous grace*, which provided the murmuring Israelites with manna from on high and with water out of the smitten rock.

What has been said in the last paragraph is generally acknowledged, but it is now supposed that all is changed when we reach Exodus 19 and 20. To use an expression which is commonly employed in some circles, “At Sinai Israel placed themselves under law”—as though they were not “under law” previously, see Exodus 16:27-28! Then it was “the Dispensation of Law” began, a dispensation which it is insisted was, in its fundamental essentials, radically different from this Christian era. As a sample of what we now have reference to, we transcribe a few sentences from I. M. Haldeman’s “How to Study the Bible.” There the writer affirms, “The distinctive value of dispensational truth may be seen by contrasting the dispensation of the Holy Ghost with the Mosaic dispensation.” Among the points of difference, Mr. H. gives the following, “In the Mosaic dispensation, God dealt according to man’s work. In the Holy Ghost’s dispensation, He deals



according to Christ's work. In the Mosaic dispensation, God dealt on the basis of Law. In the Holy Ghost dispensation, He deals on the basis of Grace. In the Mosaic dispensation, God said, 'Do, and live.' In the Holy Ghost dispensation, He says, 'Live and do'."

Now we have no hesitation in saying that such brief and bald statements as these are most misleading and mischievous. The first of the above contrasts ignores the fact that the redemptive work of Christ was retroactive in its efficacy and value, and that from Abel onwards God has *always* dealt with His spiritual elect on the ground of Christ's atonement, Romans 3:24-25 and 1 Peter 1:19-20. The second contrast drawn needs considerable amplification. God is dealing with all who are out of Christ "on the basis of Law" as much today as He did with Israel in the time of Moses—as they shall yet discover to their eternal undoing, Romans 3:19, and as will be shown in the paragraphs which follow, God acted in grace with Israel during the Mosaic economy as truly as He is acting in grace now. If by the term "life" in the third contrast, Mr. Haldeman means *spiritual* and *eternal* life (as the second member of it seems to clearly denote), then his statement is positively horrible, false doctrine of the worst kind.

In considering the constitution which God gave to Israel at Sinai, most of our moderns appear to fix their whole attention on the moral law and utterly ignore *the ceremonial*. The two ought to be regarded together, for they formed one complete whole. They presented the two sides of God's character and nature, as "light" (1Jo 1:5) and "love" (1Jo 4:8). The moral law exhibited the righteousness and holiness of God; the ceremonial law reflected His love and grace. The one was given to reveal and convict of sin; the other was given to point to the blessed provision which the free favour of God has made for the blotting out of sin. The one was to show man his ruin; the other made known the remedy for that ruin. The ceremonial law, with its sin-offerings, its priesthood, its blessed provisions, proclaimed in no uncertain terms the *grace* of God, and it is ignorance of the worst kind to refer to the Mosaic economy as a stern regime of unrelieved justice, unmodified by the gracious provisions for failure which were found in the Levitical institutions.

That God dealt in *grace* with the nation of Israel after they received the law from His mouth at Sinai is so plain that only the blind can fail to see it, yet as this is now so little perceived, we feel that we must labour the point. A most noteworthy proof thereof is found in the very next incident which occurred after Jehovah first announced the Ten Words. When Moses returned to the mount, Aaron made a golden calf and the nation worshipped the same. A more flagrant violation of their covenant with the Lord could scarcely be imagined, though God chastened them for their offense, yet as Jeremiah 31:2 declares, "The people which were left of the sword *found grace* in the wilderness." Blessed is it to behold the typical mediator pleading on the behalf of his erring brethren and averting from them the divine wrath.

When Moses returned again to the mount, carrying with him the two hewn tables for God to write the Ten Commandments upon, we are told that, "The LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, *merciful and gracious*, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:5-7). What a blessed mingling was this of grace and law, of sovereign benignity and righteousness, of compassion and holiness! Let those who so loudly insist that "law and grace will no more mingle than will oil and water," seriously ponder the above passage and revise their foolish and one-sided conception of things. It is blessed to see how Hezekiah (2Ch 30:9), Nehemiah (9:17) and Jonah (4:2), each rested upon *this* precious word in Exodus 34:6.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall *bless* the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and *be gracious* unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num 6:22-26). How can such a passage as this be fitted into the narrow conception of the Mosaic economy which is being propagated so ardently by the dispensationalists? It cannot. One almost wonders whether many of them know there is such a passage in the Pentateuch! Those verses record the benediction which the high priest pronounced upon Israel. What greater and grander blessing can be prayed for today?

The principle of *grace* was prominently exhibited in the civil law which the Lord gave unto His people. Therein Israel was taught to be *gracious* in their conduct. Many examples might be given, but we must here content ourselves with a few, leaving the reader to follow up the subject for himself. In Exodus 21:2, we find that God gave orders, “If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh *he shall go out free for nothing*.” “If thou lend money to any of my people that is *poor* by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. If thou at all take thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; *for I am gracious*” (Exo 22:25-27).

“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning” (Lev 19:13)—this in order that the labourer might have money with which to purchase food for his evening meal. “If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young” (Deu 22:6). “When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence” (Deu 22:8). Who can fail to see the principle of *grace* shining forth in these precepts? God thereby taught His people to be considerate of others, to be compassionate and merciful.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you” (Mat 5:43-44). These verses are often appealed to as a proof of the radical difference which obtains between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, but such an appeal betrays deplorable ignorance. Christ was there refuting the wicked errors of the Pharisees. The Old Testament inculcated *the same gracious treatment of “enemies”* as Christ insisted upon. “If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again” (Exo 23:4). “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:18). “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth” (Pro 24:17). “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink” (Pro 25:21). One wonders if present-day dispensationalists read their Bibles at all or if they are content to merely echo what their predecessors have said.

Notwithstanding their waywardness and continued backsliding, God dealt *in grace* with Israel all through their long and checkered history. Read through the book of Judges and see how often He raised up deliverers for them. Read through the Kings and the Chronicles and note His long-suffering benignity in sending them prophet after prophet. After Israel had fallen to the low level they did in the reign of Ahab, what grace was displayed in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. Read carefully Isaiah 1:2-15, and then ponder that amazing invitation in 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Where in all the New Testament is there a word which, for pure grace, exceeds this of Isaiah 1:18?!

Right down to the end of the Old Testament we find God dealing in grace with Israel. In the days of Hezekiah “the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet” (2Ki 13:23). In the days of Hosea, they were invited to, “Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and *receive us graciously*” (Hos 14:2). As late as Malachi, we find the prophet saying, “And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will *be gracious* unto us” (Mal 1:9).

The godly in Israel, during the Mosaic economy, had a vastly different conception of God than have our dispensationalists. Hear the Psalmist as he declares, “Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful” (Psa 116:5). Hear him again as he bursts forth into adoring praise, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases...He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa 103:2-3, 10)—can *Christians* say more? “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psa 130:3)! *What*, then, is *the great distinction* between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation? This: then, God’s grace was confined unto one nation, now it flows forth unto *all nations*!

## HEART WORK

### Part Six

The heart of man is his worst part before it be regenerate and his best part afterwards. It is the seat of principles and the source of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian ought to be, principally fixed upon it. The great difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God and the great difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God. Herein lies the very pinch and stress of religion. Here is that which makes the way to life a narrow way and the gate of heaven a straight one. To afford some direction and help in this great work, these articles have been prepared. We realize their many defects, yet trust that God will be pleased to use them. No other subject can begin to compare with it in practical importance.

The general neglect of the heart is the root cause of the present sad state of Christendom. The remainder of this article might readily be devoted unto the verifying and amplifying of that statement, instead, we merely point out briefly one or two of the more prominent features. Why is it that so many preachers have withheld from their congregations that which was, so obviously, most needed? Why have they “spoken smooth things” instead of wielding the sword of the Spirit? Because their own hearts were not right with God—*His* holy fear was not upon them. An “honest and good heart” (Luk 8:15) will cause a servant of Christ to preach what he sees to be the most essential and profitable truths of the Word, however displeasing they may be unto many of his people. He will faithfully rebuke, exhort, admonish, correct, and instruct, whether his hearers like it or not.

Why have so many church members departed from the faith and given heed to seducing spirits? Why have multitudes been led away by the error of the wicked, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness? Why have so many others been attracted to companies of notional professors, which, despite their proud boasts of being the only people gathered together in (or unto) the name of Christ, are, for the most part, people who have only an acquaintance with the letter of Scripture and are strangers to practical godliness? Ah, the answer is not far to seek—it was because they had no *heart* acquaintance with the things of God. It is they who are sickly and diseased which fall easy victims unto the quacks. So it is those whose hearts are never rooted and grounded in the Truth, which are tossed about with every wind of doctrine. The study and guarding of the heart is the best antidote against the infectious errors of the times. And this leads us to point out some of the *advantages* of keeping the heart.

1. The pondering and garrisoning of the heart is a great help to the understanding in the deep things of God. An honest and experienced heart is a wonderful aid to a weak head. Such a heart will serve as a commentary upon a great portion of the Scriptures. When such a one reads the Psalms of David or the Epistles of Paul, he will find there many of his own difficulties stated and solved. He will find them speaking the language of his own heart—recounting *his* experiences, expressing *his* sorrows and joys. By a close and regular study of the heart, he will be far better fitted to understand the things of God than graceless rabbis and inexperienced doctors—not only will they be clearer, but far sweeter unto him. A man may discourse orthodoxly and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, of the preciousness of Christ, and the sweetness of communion with God, who has never felt the impressions or efficacy of them upon his own spirit. But O how dull and dry will these *notions* be unto those who have *experienced* them!

Ah, my reader, experience is the great schoolmaster. Much in Job and Lamentations will seem dull and uninteresting until you have had deeper exercises of soul. The seventh chapter of Romans is not likely to appeal much unto you until you make more conscience of indwelling sin. Many of the later Psalms will appear too extravagant in their language until you enjoy closer and sweeter fellowship with God. But the more you endeavour to keep your heart, and bring it into subjection unto God, to keep from it the evil solicitations of Satan, the more *suited to your own case* will you find many chapters of the Bible. It is not simply that you have to be in the “right mood” to appreciate, but that you have to pass through certain exercises of heart ere you can discover their appropriateness. Then it is that you will have “felt” and “tasted” for yourself the things of which the inspired writers treat. Then it is you will have the key which unlocks many a verse that is fast closed unto masters of Hebrew and Greek.

2. Care in keeping the heart supplies one of the best evidences of sincerity. There is no external act which distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor, but before this trial no hypocrite can stand. It is true that when they think death to be very near, many will cry out of the wickedness and fear of their hearts, but that signifies nothing more than does the howling of an animal when it is in distress. But if thou art tender of thy conscience, watchful of thy thoughts, and careful each day of the workings and frames of thy heart, this strongly argues the sincerity of it, for what but a real hatred of sin, what but a sense of the divine eye being upon thee, could put any one upon these secret duties which lie out of the observation of all creatures? If, then, it be such a desirable thing to have a fair testimony of your integrity, and to know of a truth that you fear God, then study, watch, keep the heart.

The true comfort of our souls much depends upon this, for he that is negligent in the keeping of his heart, is generally a stranger to spiritual assurance and the sweet comforts flowing from it. God does not usually indulge lazy souls with inward peace, for He will not be the patron of

carelessness. He has united together our diligence and comfort, and they are greatly mistaken who suppose that the beautiful child of assurance can be born without soul pangs. Diligent self-examination is called for—first the looking into the Word and then the looking into our hearts, to see how far they correspond. It is true the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian, but He cannot be discerned by His essence. It is His operations that manifest Him and these are known by the graces He produces in the soul, and those can only be perceived by diligent search and honest scrutiny of the heart. It is in the heart the Spirit works.

3. Care in keeping the heart makes blessed and fruitful the means of grace and the discharge of our spiritual duties. O what precious communion we have with God when He is approached in a right frame of soul. Then we may say with David, “My meditation of him shall be sweet” (Psa 104:34). But when the heart be indisposed, full of the things of this world or weighted down by the cares of this life, then we miss the comfort and joy which should be ours. The sermons you hear and the articles you read (if by *God’s* servants) will appear very different if you bring a *prepared* heart to them! If the heart be right, you will not grow drowsy while hearing the reading of the riches of God’s grace, the glories of Christ, the beauty of holiness, or the needs-be for a scripturally ordered walk. It was because the heart was neglected you got so little from attending to the means of grace!

The same holds good of prayer. O what a difference there is between a deeply exercised and spiritually burdened heart pouring out itself before God in fervent supplication and the utterance of verbal petitions by rote! It is the difference between reality and formality. He who is diligent in heart work and perceives the state of his own soul is at no loss in knowing *what* to ask God for. So he who makes it a practice of walking with God, communing with God, meditating upon God, spontaneously worships Him in spirit and in truth. Like David he will say, “My heart is inditing a good matter” (Psa 45:1). The Hebrew there is very suggestive. Literally, it is “My heart is boiling up a good matter.” It is a figurative expression taken from a living spring, which is bubbling up fresh water. The formalist has to rack his mind, and as it were, laboriously pump up something to say unto God, but he who makes conscience of heart work finds his soul like a bottle full of new wine—ready to burst, giving vent to sorrow or joy as his case may be.

4. Diligence in keeping the heart will make the soul stable in the hour of temptation. The care or neglect of the conscience largely determines our attitude toward and response unto solicitations of evil. The careless heart falls an easy prey to Satan. His main attacks are made upon the heart, for if he gains *that*, he gains all, for it commands the whole man! Alas, how easy a conquest is an *unguarded* heart. It is no more difficult for the devil to capture it, than for a burglar to enter a house whose windows and doors are unfastened. It is the watchful heart that both discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes in its full strength. It is much like a large stone rolling down a hill! It is easy to stop at first, but very difficult after it has gained full momentum. So, if we cherish the first vain imagination as it enters the mind, it will soon grow into a powerful lust which will not take a nay.

Acts are preceded by desires and desires by thoughts. A sinful object first presents itself to the imagination and unless *that* be nipped in the bud, the affections will be stirred and enlisted. If the heart does not repel the evil imagination, if instead it dwells on it, encourages it, feeds on it, then it will not be long before the consent of the will is obtained. A very large and important part of heart work lies in observing its first motions and checking sin *there*. The motions of sin are weakest at the first and a little watchfulness and care then prevents much trouble and mischief later. But if the first movings of sin in the imagination be not observed and resisted, then the careless heart is quickly brought under the full power of temptation and Satan is victorious.

5. The diligent keeping of the heart is a great aid to the improving of our graces. Grace never thrives in a careless soul, for the roots and habits of grace are planted in the heart, and the deeper they are rooted there, the more thriving and flourishing grace is. In Ephesians 3:17, we read of being “rooted and grounded in love.” Love in the heart is the spring of every gracious word of the mouth and of every holy act of the hand. But is not *Christ* the “root” of the Christian’s graces? Yes, the originating root, but grace is the derivative root, planted and nourished by Him, and according as *this* thrives under divine influences, so the fruits of grace are more healthy and vigorous. But in a heart which is not kept diligently, those fructifying influences are choked. Just as in an uncared-for garden, the weeds crowd out the flowers, so vain thoughts that are not disallowed and lusts which are not mortified, devour the strength of the heart. “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: *When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches*” (Psa 63:5-6).

6. The diligent care of the heart makes Christian fellowship profitable and precious. Why is it that when Christians meet together, there are often sad jarrings and contentions? It is because of unmortified passions. Why is their conversation so frothy and worthless? It is because of the vanity and earthiness of their hearts. It is not difficult to discern by the actions and converse of Christians, what frames their spirits are under. Take one whose mind is truly stayed upon God, and how serious, heavenly, and edifying is his conversation, “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God *is in his heart*” (Psa 37:30-31)! If each of us was humbled every day before God under the evils of his own heart, we should be more pitiful and tender toward others, Galatians 6:1.

7. A heart well-kept fits us for any condition God may cast us into or any service He has to use us in. He that has learnt to keep his heart lowly is fit for prosperity and he who knows how to apply Scripture promises and supports is fit to pass through any adversity. So he that can deny the pride and selfishness of his heart is fit to be employed in any service for God. Such a man was Paul. He not only ministered to others, but looked well to his own vineyard, see 1 Corinthians 9:27. And what an eminent instrument he was for God. He knew how to abound and how to suffer loss. Let the people deify him, it moved him not, except to indignation. Let them stone him, he can bear it.

8. By keeping our hearts diligently, we should the soonest remove the scandals and stumbling blocks out of the way of the world. O how the worthy name of our Lord is blasphemed because of the wicked conduct of many who bear His name. O what prejudice has been created against the Gospel by the inconsistent lives of those who preached it. But if we keep *our* hearts, we shall not add to the scandals caused by the ways of loose professors. Nay, those with whom we come into contact will see that we “had been with Jesus” (Act 4:13). When the majestic beams of holiness shine from a heavenly walk, the world will be awed and respect will again be commanded by the followers of the Lamb.

Though the keeping of the heart entails such hard labour, do not such blessed gains supply a sufficient incentive to engage diligently in the same? Look over the eight special benefits we have named and weigh them in a just balance. They are not trivial things. Then guard well your heart and watch closely *its love for God*. Jacob served seven years for Rebekah and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love that he had unto her. The labour of *love* is always delightful. If God has your heart, the feet will run swiftly in the way of His commandments. Duty will be a delight. Then let us earnestly pray, “So teach us to number our days, that we may *apply our hearts* unto wisdom” (Psa 90:12)—as we “apply” our hands unto manual tasks.

Let me now close the whole of these articles with a word or two of consolation to all serious Christians who have sought to faithfully and closely give themselves to this heart work, but who are groaning in secret over their apparent lack of success therein and who are fearful that their experience falls short of a saving one. First, this argues that your heart *is* honest and upright. If you are mourning over heart conditions and sins, that is something no hypocrite does. Many a one is now in hell who had a better heart than mine; many a one now in heaven complained of as bad a heart as thine.

Second, God would never leave thee under so many heart burdens and troubles if He intended not thy benefit thereby. You say, Lord, why do I go mourning all the day having sorrow of heart? For long have I been exercised over its hardness and not yet is it broken. Many years have I been struggling against vain thoughts and still I am plagued by them. O when shall I get a better heart? O that God would thereby show you what your heart by nature is and have you take notice of how much you are beholden to free grace! So too He would keep you humble and not fall in love with yourself.

Third, God will shortly put a blessed end to these cares, watchings, and headaches. The time is coming when your heart shall be as you would have it, when you will be delivered from all fears and sorrows, and never again cry, “O my hard, vain, earthy, filthy heart.” Then shall all darkness be purged from your understanding, all vanity from your affections, all guilt from your conscience, all perversity from your will. Then shall you be everlastingly, delightfully, ravishingly entertained, and exercised upon the supreme goodness and infinite excellency of God. Soon shall break that morning without clouds, when all the shadows shall flee away and then we “shall *be like him*; for we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2). Hallelujah!

For much in these articles, particularly the fourth and final one, we are indebted to the works of the Puritan, John Flavel (1630-1691).

## ASSURANCE

### Dialogue 4

“Good evening, Mr. Editor, I trust I am not intruding.” “No indeed, you are very welcome, Brother Humble Heart, and I am thankful to see from your countenance that your heart is lighter (Pro 15:13).” Bro. H.H.: “I am glad to say it is so at present, for the Lord has been very gracious to me and I cannot but think that it is in answer to your prayers, for the Scriptures declare, ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much’ (Jam 5:16).” Editor: “If the Lord has deigned to hear my feeble intercessions on your behalf, all praise alone to Him. But tell me something of His goodness towards you.” Bro. H.H.: “May it please the Lord to direct my thoughts, anoint my lips, and help me to do so. My story is rather a long one, but I will be as concise as the case allows.

“A poor woman, known among the Lord’s people as Sister Fearing, was left a widow some months ago, and having buried all her children, I knew she had no one to spade her garden. So

this spring I called on her and asked if she would allow me to do it.” Editor: “I am glad to hear that. If godliness be not intensely practical, then it is only a name without the reality. It is written, ‘Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world’ (Jam 1:27). And did this poor Sister avail herself of your kind offer?” Bro. H.H.: “Yes, with tears running down her face, she told me she was quite unable to express her gratitude. After a while she said, It was not so much my offer to help which moved her so deeply, but that it gave her a little hope she was not completely abandoned by God.

“I asked her why she ever entertained the thought that God had cast her off? She told me that most of the time she felt herself to be such a vile and polluted creature that a holy God could not look with any satisfaction upon her. She said she was so constantly tormented by doubts and fears that God must have given her over to an evil heart of unbelief. She added that, in spite of all her reading of the Word and crying unto the Lord for strength, her case seemed to grow worse and worse, so that it appeared heaven *must* be closed against her.” Editor: “And what reply did you make to her sorrowful complaint?” Bro. H.H.: “Why, there flowed into my mind a verse which I had not thought of for a long time. I felt it was from the Lord, and looking to Him for wisdom and tenderness, I addressed the dear soul as follows:

“Sister Fearing, I think you are too hasty in your conclusion. I have been just where you now are. I read in God’s Word, ‘The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power’ (1Co 4:20), and I reasoned that if God had set up His kingdom in my heart, then the power of sin would be broken, and alas, I found sin in me stronger than ever. I read, ‘He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him’ (1Jo 4:16), but I could not believe He dwelt in me while I was in such bondage to slavish fear. I read, ‘Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father’ (Rom 8:15), but I could not cry, ‘Abba, Father,’ so I was afraid God had nothing to do with me. I read, ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin’ (1Jo 3:9), and though I was preserved from bringing public reproach upon the name of Christ, yet I found myself continually overcome by sin within. My guilty conscience daily condemned me and unto peace I was a stranger.”

Sister Fearing: “You have accurately described my sad lot, but go on please.” Bro. H.H.: “Suffer me, then, to ask you a few honest questions. Have you been chastised, rebuked, made tender, and sore for sin? And after feeling God’s reproofs, was your spirit revived and refreshed under the Word, so that you hoped for better days?” Sister Fearing: “Yes, I have been conscious of God’s rod upon me and have owned with David, ‘Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me’ (Psa 119:75). And there have been times, all too brief, when it seemed I was softened and revived, and had a little hope, but the sun was soon again hidden behind dark clouds.” Bro. H.H.: “Well, *that* proves God *does* dwell within you, for He declares, ‘Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to *revive* the spirit of the humble, and to *revive* the heart of the contrite ones’ (Isa 57:15)!”

Sister Fearing: “Yes, I am familiar with that verse, but it makes against *me*, for had God truly ‘revived’ me, the *effects* of it would remain. Instead, I am dry and parched, lifeless and barren.” Bro. H.H.: “Again you are too hasty in ‘writing bitter things against’ yourself, Job 13:26. Such ‘revivings’ of faith, hope, and love in the soul *are* evidences of the Spirit’s indwelling. But let me now give you the verse which flowed into my mind at the beginning of our conversation. It exactly fits your case, ‘And now *for a little space* grace hath been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us *a little reviving* in our bondage’ (Ezr 9:8). Ah, dear Sister, do you



not see that this ‘little reviving,’ even though it be for ‘a little space’ is a manifestation of God’s dwelling in a broken and contrite heart?”

Editor: “That was indeed a word in season, and evidently given you by the Spirit. There are many hindered from enjoying assurance through unnecessary fears. Because sin is in them as an active and restless principle, they imagine they have no contrary principle of holiness, and because in part they are carnal, judge that they are not spiritual. Because grace is but feebly active, they conclude they are void of it and because for a long season they enjoy not strong consolation, suppose they have no title to it. They fail to distinguish between the motions of the flesh and the motions of the Spirit. As surely as sin manifests the flesh to be in us, so does grieving over it, striving against it, repenting for it, and the confessing of it to God, show the Spirit or new nature indwells us. The Christian’s sighs and groans are among his best evidences that he is regenerate.”

Bro. H.H.: “May I ask, exactly what you meant when you said, Many are hindered from enjoying assurance through *unnecessary fears*? My reason for asking is, because in Philippians 2:12, God bids His people work out their salvation *with fear and trembling*.” Editor: “Your question is well taken. We must distinguish sharply between the fears of *godly jealousy* and the fears of *unbelief*. The one is a distrusting of self, the other is a doubting of God. The former is opposed to pride and carnal confidence, the latter is the enemy of true peace. The eleven apostles manifested the fear of godly jealousy when the Saviour announced that one would betray Him, and each of them inquired, ‘Lord, is it I?’ (Mat 26:25). David gave way to the fear of unbelief when he said, ‘I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul’ (1Sa 27:1). But I have interrupted your narrative. Tell me how Sister Fearing responded to your giving her Ezra 9:8.”

Bro. H.H.: “Really, it seemed to make little impression. She sighed deeply and for a while said nothing. Then she continued, ‘I fear it would be presumption for me to say that I have ever been *revived*, for a dead soul cannot be—he must first be quickened. Probably the raising of my spirits under the reading or hearing of the Word is nothing more than the joy of the stony-ground hearer’ (Mat 13:20-21). To which I replied, But one who has never been quickened has *no* pantings after God, never seeks Him at all, but seeks to banish Him entirely from his thoughts. True, he may go to church and keep up a form of godliness before others, but there is no diligent seeking after Him in private, no yearnings for communion with Him.

“Perhaps, dear Sister, it may be a day of ‘small things’ (Zec 4:10) with you. Often there is life, where there is not strength. A child may breathe and cry, yet cannot talk or walk. If God be the object of your affection, if sin be the cause of your grief, if conformity to Christ be the longing of your heart, then a good work *has* begun in you (Phi 1:6). If it is indwelling sin which makes you so wretched from day to day, if it be deliverance from its polluting affects you yearn and pray for, if it be the lustings of the flesh you are struggling against, then it must be because a principle of holiness has been implanted in your heart. Such godly exercises are not in us by nature. They are the products of indwelling grace. Despair not, for it is written of Christ, ‘a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench’ (Mat 12:20).”

Sister Fearing: “Yes, it is one thing to understand these things intellectually, but it is quite another for God to apply them in power to the heart. *That* is what I long for, and that is what I lack. My wound is far too deadly for any man to heal. O that I could be sure as to whether my disrelish of sin arises from mere natural convictions of conscience that every ungodly person feels more or less, whether they are suggestions from Satan for the purpose of deceiving me, or whether they actually are the strivings of the new nature against the old. Nothing short of the

personal, mighty, and saving power of the Holy Spirit realized in my heart, will or can give me genuine relief.”

Bro. H.H.: “I am thankful to hear you say this. Human comforts may satisfy an empty professor, but such a plaster will not heal one of the elect when stricken by God. It is His purpose to cut off *every* arm of flesh from them, to strip them and bring them, in their helplessness, as empty-handed beggars before the throne of His grace. As to whether or not the life of God be actually planted in the soul, *therein* lies the grand mystery. *That* is the pivot on which eternal destiny must turn. And no verdict from man can satisfy on that point. Only the Lord Himself can give such a testimony or witness as will satisfy one of His children. But when He *does* shine into the soul, when He applies His Word in power, when *He* says, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace,’ then no word from a preacher is needed. The Lord keep you at His feet till He grants this.

“Until very recently I too was much exercised over the great danger of Satan instilling a false peace and making me believe that all was well, when it was not so, as I was also much perplexed to know how to distinguish between the convictions of *natural* conscience and the exercises of a *renewed* conscience. But the Lord has shown me that as a tree is known by its fruits, so the nature of a cause may be determined by the *character of the effects* it produces. They who are deluded by the false peace which Satan bestows are filled with conceit, presumption, and carnal confidence. They do not beg God to search them, being so sure of heaven they consider it quite unnecessary. The convictions of natural conscience harden, stop the mouth of prayer, and lead to despair. The convictions of a renewed conscience produce penitent confession, lead to Christ, and issue in honesty and uprightness before God.

“In conclusion, let me earnestly counsel you, dear Sister, to have nothing to do with those who profess their experience to be all peace and joy, and who, if you ask them whether they are tormented by the plague of their own heart or whether they have *felt* the blood of Christ applied to their own conscience, laugh, and say they have nothing to do with feelings, but live above them. Such deluded creatures can be of no more help to a groaning saint than one suffering anguish from bodily ills would receive any relief from the so-called Christian Scientists, who tell him his pains are mental delusions, and to think only of health and happiness. One and another are equally physicians of no value. Instead, pour out your woes into the ears of the Great Physician and in His own perfect time, He will pour oil and wine into your wounds, and put a new song into your mouth.”

Bro. H.H.: “Since then I have said nothing more to her on the subject, believing it best to leave her alone with God.” Editor: “I am glad to hear that. None but blind Arminians will attempt to do the Holy Spirit’s work for Him. Much damage is often done to souls by trying to force things. When God begins a work, we may safely leave it in *His* hands to continue and complete the same. And how happy I am, dear Brother, to perceive the dew of the Spirit upon your own soul. It appears that ‘the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear,’ and ‘the time of the singing of birds is come’ (Song 2:11-12) with you.”

Bro. H.H.: “Thanks be unto God for taking pity upon such a wretch. It is much better with me now. The strange thing is, though I had little or no real assurance myself when I commenced speaking to Sister Fearing, but as she mentioned the different things which so sorely troubled her, God seemed to put into my mouth the very words most needed, and as I spake them to her, He sealed them into my own heart.” Editor: “Yes, it is as we read in Proverbs 11:25, ‘The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.’ In communicating the Word of God to His children, our own hearts are refreshed and our own faith is established. To him that useth what he hath shall more be given.

“I have long perceived the truth of what the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 1:4, ‘Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.’ It is God’s way to take His people, *and especially His servants*, through trying and painful experiences, in order that they may *use* to His glory the consolation wherewith He has comforted them. It is those who know most of the plague of their own heart, who are best fitted to speak a word in season to weary souls. It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh and it is he who has passed through the furnace who can best deal with those now in the fire. Let us pray that it may please God to be equally gracious unto Sister Fearing.”

## OUR ANNUAL LETTER

“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6). How grand the assurance that high above this ever-fluctuating world is One “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17)! The great Jehovah is eternal, immutable, uninfluenced by anything outside Himself. What a satisfying Object for faith to be engaged with! The immutability of God provides an all-sufficient foundation for the heart to rest upon. Nations may rise and nations may fall, empires may expand and then collapse, world conferences may convene with high hopes and then adjourn with hopes dashed, but the covenant God of the spiritual Israel *changes not*.

Because God is immutable the sons of Jacob “are not consumed.” Who are these “sons of Jacob”? They are those who bear the image of their spiritual father. The *spiritual* “sons of Jacob” are they who, in felt helplessness, cling to Jehovah and cry, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Gen 32:26). They are those, who, experiencing many ups and downs and despite innumerable failures, are able to say, “I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD” (Gen 49:18). Such, though harassed and frequently tripped up by Satan, are “not consumed” by him. Such, though at times brought very low, are “not consumed” by poverty and starvation. Such, though perhaps sorely tempted, are “not consumed” by the unpardonable sin of suicide. Many, many thousands during the “depression” have put an end to their wretched existence on earth, but there is not a line in all the Scriptures which hints that one of Christ’s redeemed has or ever will.

Nor has this “son of Jacob,” the editor, nor the magazine, been “consumed” by the stress and straitness of the “hard times.” Though without any salary for the past five years, we have contracted no debts and owe no man anything. Graciously has our faithful God continued to supply our every need, and not only so, He has enabled us to minister to more of His dear people who are in need! Nor do we believe for a moment that *our* circumstances are more favourable because we are any better than some of our suffering brethren and sisters. No indeed, in and of ourselves we are leprous beggars, entirely dependent upon the grace and mercy of our sovereign God, and every cause have we to say with the Psalmist, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa 103:10).

Not only has the God of all grace preserved this magazine through the most difficult year the world has experienced financially during the present century, but He has also granted us many different proofs that His blessing rests upon the same. Backsliders have been restored, numbers influenced to separate from the corrupt churches, and many have been led into a closer walking with God, for all of which we ask the Christian reader to return thanks and offer praise unto Him to Whom alone it is due. The extracts from various letters received, given in the “Welcome Tidings” article in the July issue, convey some idea of how the Holy Spirit is being pleased to apply the messages unto souls here and there. These encouragements along the way nerve us to go on pressing forward along the path to which God has called us.

Of course it is only to be expected that sometimes we receive letters of an entirely different character. Some of the articles which God has enabled us to write have been too searching for those who are seeking to serve two masters and they want the magazine no more. Out of the hundreds of names which we removed from our list at the end of last year (many of whom we fondly hoped to hear from) hardly any wrote requesting that the “Studies” be sent to them again this year. We know quite well that if we would devote an article each month to “The Signs of the Times,” a page to “Questions (on the Bible) and Answers,” and would introduce one or two other such things, our little magazine would be popular in a much wider circle than we now reach. But it is our aim not to tickle the ear, but to search the conscience; not to pander unto the sensational-monger, but to feed Christ’s hungry sheep; not to please empty professors, but to make God’s children more and more *out of love with themselves*.

But instead of being surprised that some are not able to digest “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8), we are thankful that God has enabled so many to receive them. Purgative medicine is not pleasant, either physically or spiritually, and the flesh in the Christian is no different from the flesh in the non-Christian, and only as the Spirit subdues it, is any one able to appropriate that which *condemns* the flesh. In view of the fact that so much is said about the love of God, and so little about His holiness; that so much is said about the blood and finished work of Christ, and so little about His yoke and the example which He has left us to follow; that so much is said about salvation from hell, and so little about salvation from self-will and self-pleasing; that so much is said about the free gifts of God, and so little about the imperative necessity of an obedient walk (Heb 5:9); that so much is said about the security of the saint, and so little about his working out his salvation “with fear and trembling”;—it is indeed a marvel that there is still a remnant left who *are* willing to read a magazine which honestly seeks to emphasize *both* sides with due proportion.

We are hopeful that God will be pleased to raise up other men who will, by the help of His Spirit, emphasize those portions of His truth which are now so sadly and so widely neglected. We are hopeful that God will grant a fresh outpouring of His Spirit and are endeavouring to plead before Him the promise found in the last part of Isaiah 59:19—may scores of our readers be led to *daily* plead the same. Yet, we are certain that no heaven-sent revival will come until there is a faithful preaching *of the law*, by which “is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20), and a stronger emphasis laid upon the indispensable need for *repentance*. But if God withholds a revival, then we fully expect to see fewer and fewer wanting this magazine. Would it not seem a tragedy if God continued to give the editor messages, sent in funds to print them, and had not sufficient readers to justify the publication of them? Yet this is a very real possibility! Will you not, then, pray more definitely and earnestly *for an increased circulation*.

Our list of names would be very much longer than it now is, if we would continue to send the “Studies” year after year to those who conclude they are entitled to them, merely from the fact

that there is no subscription price. But though we send forth the magazine free, we are very far from getting it printed for nothing. It costs us ninety cents (three shillings and nine pence) to each person we send to for a year. Possibly there are some who conclude there is some organization or wealthy "board" behind us. No indeed. This little messenger is published purely as "a work of faith and labour of love," for the editor takes *nothing* out of it for his arduous and continuous services. It is supported by the voluntary gifts of the Lord's people, many of whom are very poor in this world's goods, and therefore we feel it would be a sin to use their sacrificial offerings to send the magazine to those who would trade on their generosity. Gladly do we send it to many real saints *unable* to contribute.

While seeking to press those things which make for practical godliness in the daily life, we realize there is a balance of truth to be preserved and that there is a danger of getting the Christian too much occupied with himself and too little with Christ. Therefore, if the Lord spares us and permits the "Studies" to be published through 1934, we expect to vary our note of emphasis. Having written so much of late upon the responsibility of man, a lengthy series on the high sovereignty of God should prevent our readers from becoming lop-sided. This series is taken from a book now out of print, kindly loaned by a friend, "The Providence of God," by Alexander Carson, being a most able and helpful topical treatment of the book of Esther. Then, if the Lord enables, the editor hopes to write a series on the basic doctrine of Justification, wherein we shall be largely engaged (D.V.) with the grace of God and the imputed righteousness of Christ.

The Lord willing, the exposition of Hebrews will continue for another year at least, as will also "The Life of David." The "Dispensational" articles are not quite completed, and when they are, we hope to follow them with several upon "The Covenants." Probably some of our readers have been somewhat disappointed by the cover-page articles on the Holy Spirit. It was our desire to treat the whole subject as comprehensively as we could, yet briefly. Having dwelt this year upon the doctrinal and dispensational aspects, we expect to treat more of the experimental and practical side. Having been engaged principally with the *Person* of the Spirit, from now on we shall consider His *work*, in its manifold aspects. We greatly feel our own deep need of an especial anointing for this task, and beg our readers to pray definitely for the same.

Perhaps some were disappointed that we offered no comments in our columns upon "The World's Economic Conference" which convened in London, when the representatives of no less than sixty-six nations met together to discuss the grave problems which affect their peoples. But we long that our own heart and the hearts of our readers should be engaged with other objects. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1Jo 2:17). What profit is there for the soul in reading over their wranglings? "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth" (Isa 45:9). The grand consolation for the children of faith is that our God is upon the throne, working "*all* things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). The Conference fizzled out virtually as a farce, but the Lord's purpose in it was not foiled.

At the time of this writing, it is rather difficult to advise our friends in what form to send their gifts, as the currency of most nations is still fluctuating. If those in Australia will enclose stamps or notes (*not* money orders), we can get them exchanged. We would prefer for those in Great Britain to send us U.S.A. paper money, if they can purchase (at their bank) dollars for not more than 4.6. Or if they will kindly inquire at the Post Office and be regulated by the American value of the pound, we shall esteem it a favour. If they are informed the pound is worth 19/- in the U.S.A., kindly send us an International Money Order made out to *York, Penna., U.S.A.*; but if

worth less than 19/- please send local Money Order to Mr. Winstone. The 1933 bound Volume is now ready at one dollar postpaid, or 4/6 abroad.

Once more the Lord has called upon us to strike our pilgrim tent. The landlord was seeking to sell the house which we rented during the past two and a half years in Millmont, and we were likely to receive notice to move at any time. After waiting on God for directions, He made it plain that He would have us sojourn next in York, a town of some fifty thousand people, and less than one hundred miles away from our last abode. Here there is a small company of the Lord's saints with whom we expect to have happy fellowship and to whom we hope to minister the Word orally at least once a week. Will readers kindly note carefully our new address.

On our study wall is a painted motto bearing the words, "Thou Remainest," which is of great comfort to us. During the past year quite a number of dear friends who have taken the "Studies" from the beginning have been called Home; among them, several who were much used of God in the financial support of this monthly messenger. But "*Thou* Remainest." He will never leave us nor forsake us, and while He has use for this little magazine, we have no doubt whatever but that He will continue to graciously supply our every need. These lines are being written six weeks before our year closes (on December 1), and there is every prospect that we shall again be permitted to close with a small credit balance. Hallelujah! great is God's faithfulness. God heard your prayers, dear reader!

During the past year it has been the happy privilege of the editor and his devoted wife to correspond with many of our readers upon their personal problems and trials. We take this opportunity in saying that we welcome letters telling of difficulties and sorrows, and seek grace and wisdom to send a word of counsel and comfort in reply. Any time something may be obscure in our writings, do not hesitate to let us know. Criticisms we always seek to weigh before the Lord. Correspondence along spiritual lines are earnestly invited. We long to redeem the time and be of help to as many souls as possible. We feel a real relation exists between us and many of our readers.

Once more our gracious God has brought the editor and his wife through another year's hard work without any sickness, which we attribute very largely to the intercession of our brethren and sisters in Christ. Good health is a great need for which we cannot be too thankful. From the human side, we are convinced that a plain diet and *moderation* in all things, has much to do with keeping our body in good working order. We earnestly covet the continued supplications of our friends that God's rich blessing will abide upon us and His work in our lives. Pray that our circulation may be increased and that more spiritual fruit will grow unto God's glory. "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf" (2Co 1:11). We send hearty Christian greetings unto all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Yours by God's abounding mercy, A.W. and V.E. Pink, 531 Thomas St., York, Pa., U.S.A.

# APPENDICES

## About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: [www.chapellibrary.org/studies](http://www.chapellibrary.org/studies)

Other literature: [www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog](http://www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog)

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- |                                 |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| - The Sovereignty of God        | 176 pages |
| - Comfort for Christians        | 79 pages  |
| - Profiting from the Word       | 96 pages  |
| - Seven Sayings of the Savior   | 94 pages  |
| - Spiritual Union and Communion | 175 pages |
| - The Attributes of God         | 105 pages |

- The Doctrine of Human Depravity	241 pages
- The Doctrine of Revelation	214 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 1	190 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 2	173 pages
- The Holy Spirit	196 pages



# Biography of A.W. Pink

*by Erroll Hulse*

Concerning Calvinism<sup>1</sup> and Arminianism<sup>2</sup> during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

## 1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives

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<sup>1</sup> **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the “doctrines of grace”; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians’ remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

<sup>2</sup> **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! “Lucifer” was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur’s character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink’s conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody<sup>3</sup> in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur’s decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her husband was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur resigned the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry.

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<sup>3</sup> **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Arthur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

## 2. *Pink's Experience in Australia*

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 49

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on “Human Responsibility.” Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not themselves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink’s Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink’s wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.<sup>5</sup> Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

### 3. *Impact of Pink’s Writing Ministry*

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and ’70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink’s writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink’s books has lessened.

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth

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<sup>5</sup> **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).

century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, “Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century.”<sup>6</sup>

*A South African by birth, **Erroll Hulse** gave much of his life to furthering the cause of the gospel and Reformed doctrine in Africa, as well as missions around the world. Through a wide range of mission activities, conference initiatives, and editing Reformation Today magazine, Erroll served as a vital link for Chapel Library to international pastors and missionaries.*

*After conversion to Christ in university, Erroll studied theology at the London Bible College and benefited from the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster. His pastorates in the UK include 23 years in Cuckfield, West Sussex, three years in Liverpool, and twenty years as Associate Pastor with a missions mandate at Leeds Reformed Baptist Church. Erroll’s life leaves a legacy of passionate prayer for the global cause of Christ, a hunger for Spirit-wrought revival, and ceaseless activity fueled by a love for Christ and the lost.*

*From 1970-2013, Erroll Hulse edited and wrote extensively for Reformation Today magazine, which continues today as a bi-monthly magazine featuring insightful articles relevant to the Reformed community, with news from global mission fields. Visit [www.reformation-today.org](http://www.reformation-today.org) for more information.*

*The Carey Conference is another continuing ministry of Erroll’s Reformation Today Trust. This annual conference in the United Kingdom is aimed at equipping pastors, church leaders, and their wives.*

*Erroll and others began the African Pastors’ Conferences in 2006 to encourage a recovery of African churches from the influx of the prosperity gospel and syncretism with traditional religions. The conferences operate as a collaborative effort of South African and Zambian Reformed Baptist churches. Reception has been enthusiastic and conferences have spread over many countries in English-speaking Africa. Churches in Africa, UK, and the USA sponsor these conferences by financially “adopting” conferences in specific locations. For more information visit [www.reformation-today.org/african-pastors-conference/](http://www.reformation-today.org/african-pastors-conference/).*

*We are deeply grateful to the Lord for Erroll’s life, his fellowship in Christ, partnership in ministry, and passion for global mission endeavors.*

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

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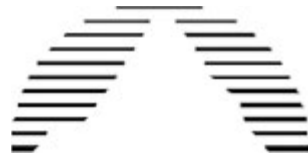
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