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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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

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FOUND

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luk 19:10). Our very familiarity with those words is apt to deprive them of their impressiveness and make us lose our sense of wonderment at them. First, in connection with the Seeker Himself. This was none other than the Beloved and co-equal of the Father. To engage in His quest, it was needful for Him to leave heaven and come down to this earth. But more—it was required that He become incarnate and take upon Him the nature not of angels, but be made “in the likeness of sin’s flesh” (Rom 8:3). Nor was that sufficient—He had to go where the objects of His search were, and that entailed His being made sin, coming under the curse of the broken Law, being abandoned of God for a season. This was absolutely imperative if any of Adam’s fallen race were to be recovered, for in themselves they were utterly undone, irretrievably ruined, but the Son of God became the Son of man to bring hope to the hopeless, to give life to the dead, to heal the incurable, to—not merely try to, or offer to, but *actually*—seek and save that which was lost.

There could be no possibility of failure in connection with such a mission as that, for the infinite resources of the Godhead guaranteed its complete success, and therefore was it divinely announced of Him as a child, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he *shall save* his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). Not simply that He would be willing on His part so to do, but that, despite their native unwillingness and all other opposition, He *should* save them. Ah, but note who are the ones to be so favoured and blessed—not all mankind, but “his people”—those given to Him by the Father before the foundation of the world (Joh 17:2, 24; Eph 1:4). It was not the “dogs” (Mat 7:6), the “wolves” (Mat 10:16), or the “goats” (Mat 25:32), but the “sheep” that Christ came to seek and to save (Joh 10:16), and for whom He gave His infinitely precious life (Joh 10:11). And that was given at no peradventure or uncertainty, but with the infallible assurance that He “*shall see* his seed...he *shall see* of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa 53:10-11).

As the Lord Jesus so plainly and so blessedly taught, He would “go after that which is lost, until he find it” (Luk 15:4), for since a lost sheep never seeks its owner, the Shepherd must seek His sheep. This He does, in marvellous grace, with every one of God’s elect, and therefore does He declare of each of them, “I am found of them that *sought me not*” (Isa 65:1). From the apostle’s quotation of it in Romans 10:20, it is clear that, in its general scope, that verse was a prediction of God’s turning unto the Gentiles after His casting off the Jews. The heathen nations neither sought after God nor called upon His name; yet without any solicitation from them, the preachers of the Gospel were sent unto them. But as John Calvin (1509-1564) pointed out, their case “was a type of a universal fact.” Such is indeed so, as Old Testament and New abundantly illustrate. The salvation of any lost sinner is due alone to the amazing and sovereign grace of God, and not because of anything he does or purposes doing, for not only is his salvation entirely unbought, but *unsought* by him.

Take the case of *Abraham*, and his is a pattern one, for he is “the father [or prototype] of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11). Joshua 24:2, 14 reveals something of the conditions in which he lived before and at the time when God “found” him. He came of an idolatrous stock who served false gods. When the Lord would humble the proud hearts of Israel, He reminded them of their lowly origin and bade them look “to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father” (Isa 51:1-2)—whom I plucked as a brand from the burning. Acts 7:2 informs us, “The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia.” That was an act of distinguishing favour, for He did not discover Himself to his fellow citizens. As Isaiah 51:2 declares, “I called him *alone*, and blessed him,” and as Joshua 24:3 records, “I took him throughout all the land of Canaan.” Thus, in his case, God was found of one who sought Him not.

Take the case of *Jacob*. If ever there was a man who exemplified in his own person that God has chosen the base things of the world (1Co 1:28), it was he. According to the flesh, there was nothing winsome or pleasing about him. Selfish, scheming, deceitful, untruthful, he was a most unamiable character. There was nothing whatever in him to attract the love of God, yet on the memorable night at Bethel, he found Him whom he sought not. A fugitive from his father’s house, fleeing from his brother’s wrath, most probably with no thought of God in his mind, he laid himself down on the ground to sleep, with stones for his pillows. It was then that the God of all grace appeared unto him and made Himself known as a *giving God* (Gen 28:13), and declared, “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” He found him when he had nothing, deserved nothing but wrath, gave him everything, and promised to protect him wheresoever he went.

Moses (Exo 3:1-2), the Hebrews in Egyptian bondage, Samuel, David, are further examples. But consider the case of *the woman at the well* (Joh 4), who most unmistakably found the Lord, though she sought Him not. A despised Samaritan, an adulteress, shunned by others, she came at midday—when she supposed the well would be deserted—to draw water. She was unacquainted with the Lord Jesus, and had no expectation of meeting Him and no thought of being converted that day. Poor desolate soul! But Christ was there at the well. There *first*, for He is the Alpha of salvation as well as the Omega of it. He was there waiting for her! He knew all about her desperate need and was ready to minister unto it. He was there to illumine her darkened understanding, to overcome her prejudices, to subdue her rebellious will, to *invite Himself* into her heart. He did so, and she “left her waterpot” and went on her way rejoicing, to witness unto His grace.

Take the case of *Saul of Tarsus*. He was a self-righteous Pharisee, and when such a one came before God, it was not to seek mercy at His hands, but to thank Him that he was not as other men were, and to boast of his good deeds. He belonged to that sect which, instead of welcoming the gracious ministry of Christ, complained that He was the friend of publicans and sinners. But worse: he was filled with enmity against Him and took the lead in persecuting and hounding His people. Not only did he consent to the death of Stephen, but “he made havoc of the church,” entered the homes of its members, and committed them to prison. Having obtained yet greater authority from the high priest of the Jews, and while yet “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” he was found of Christ. So far from seeking Him, he was resisting with all his might, for it is clear

from His words in Acts 9:5, that the Spirit had been striving with him; yet, instead of yielding to conviction, he was kicking *against* the pricks!

Does some reader exclaim, “But *my case* was very different from any of those you have described above, being more like that of Nicodemus, Bartimaeus, or the dying thief. I was indeed a great sinner, yet realized my lost condition, and earnestly and diligently sought the Lord”? Even so—and you were but doing what God has commanded all to do (Isa 55:6)—that in no wise clashes with anything we have said. God was equally beforehand in *your* case, for He not only chose you before you chose Him (Joh 15:16), and loved you before you had any love for Him (1Jo 4:19), but acted upon you before you acted toward Him. He had to speak the quickening word before you could come forth from your spiritual grave (Joh 2:43), open your blind eyes ere you were able to see your lost condition, change your heart before you were disposed to seek Him, and draw (Joh 6:44) ere you came to Him. Thus you have no ground for boasting, nothing for which you can take any credit unto yourself. All the glory of your salvation belongs alone unto the Lord.

“And go after that which is lost, until he find it. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders *rejoicing*” (Luk 15:4-5). How little is *this aspect* of our salvation dwelt upon today, either by those in the pulpit or those in the pew! So self-centred are we, so occupied with what redemption brings to *us*, that we give little thought unto what it means unto the Redeemer Himself. Oh, what holy satisfaction is His each time that He sees of the travail of His soul! How *His heart* is gladdened whenever He secures another of those who were given to Him by the Father! It was in anticipation of the same that He endured the cross (Heb 12:2). Moreover, as Luke 15:6 goes on to inform us, He shares *His joy* with those in the “home” above—each time one of God’s elect is saved, tidings of the same are announced in heaven! “Every display of the Saviour’s grace is a jewel in His mediatorial crown. O what hearts have we, that we are not more humble before Him, more thankful to Him, and more joyful in Him! Lord Jesus help us, Gentile sinners, to look back, to look within, to look up, and to look forward, to excite humility, thankfulness, and joy of heart. Look forward my soul, for heaven is before you. Jesus stands ready to receive you, the Father to embrace you, the Spirit to triumph over you. Glory shall complete what grace has begun” (W. Mason, 1785).

EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

20. *Light and Love (2:10)*

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”

The apostle continues to develop his theme of the relation and interrelation of light and love. As might well be expected, he had begun with a reference to “the love of God,” for His is ever the fountain of ours, whether it be unto Himself or unto His children. As Calvin

pertinently remarked, "He pursues the same metaphor. He said that love is the only true rule according to which our life is to be formed (verse 5); he said that this rule or law is presented to us in the Gospel (verse 7); he said lastly, that it is there as the meridian light which ought to be continually looked on (verse 9). Now, on the other hand, he concludes that all are blind and walk in darkness who are strangers to love. But that he mentioned before the love of God and now the love of the brethren involves no more contrariety than there is between the effect and the cause. Besides, these are so connected together that they cannot be separated"—so united that where the one is the other is found also.

More specifically: in verses 7-11 professing Christians are tested by their response to that divine precept which enjoins the exercise of brotherly love. It is made the criterion of one's being in the light or in the darkness. John began by reminding his readers that the commandment which he was pressing upon them was no invention of his, but rather what they had first heard from the lips of Christ (Joh 13:34). That it was the old commandment which required us to love our neighbour as ourselves, but which had been renewed by the Lord Jesus, perfectly exemplified by Him in His treatment of the apostles, and then enforced by new motives and considerations. Next he had declared that the claim made by anyone to being in the light while yet he hated his brother was a false one, for such conduct demonstrated that he was still in the darkness. Finally, he urges the duty of brotherly love by a high commendation of its exercise (verse 10), and utters a most awful denunciation upon the one who violates the same (verse 11). Such appears to us to be his train of thought.

It is important to take note of the tense of the verbs in our present verse, for a more severe and searching test of Christian profession is in view than in the preceding one: there, it was a question of being in the light; here, of abiding in the light. Thus it is far more than a single act or fleeting affection which is referred to—perseverance is what crowns an action. Yet another link with the context should here be observed. At the close of verse 8 it was stated that "the true light now shineth," where the reference was more an objective one; now the subjective application is made thereof—shineth in you, and so through you—and not simply upon us as in John 8:12. There is as much difference between external and internal light, and between intellectual and spiritual, as there would have been between the twelve spies returning with only a bare report of what they had seen in the land and their actually bringing with them clusters of the grapes of Canaan upon their shoulders—a beautiful figure of Gospel graces in the heart.

As 1:6-7, has revealed, to walk in the light indicates that one is regenerate and in fellowship with God in Christ. What, then, is the relation of love to light? It is twofold: an effect thereof, and a necessary means for preserving us in the light. "Light is essential to love, and love is inseparable from this light. Light is love's home, and love is light's offspring. Love is born in the light. We have only to know God to love Him, and we have only to see God's image in our brethren to love them. As the light transforms the chrysalis into the butterfly, so light creates love, and wings it for heaven. Love grows in the light. It is a tropical plant, and thrives best in the meridian of spiritual life. Love loves in the light. When God's glory shines in the face of a Christian brother we cannot help loving him. In this sense we can love all through Christ. Onesimus the slave became in Christ Jesus a brother beloved (Phm 1). The nearest way to our brother is through the heart of Christ.

Love conquers in the light. This light subdues the flesh and eclipses the glory of the world. Love abides in the light. It is lust that seeks the darkness. Those who love darkness rather than light show that their deeds are evil" (Levi Palmer).

Brotherly love is one of the blessed fruits which issue from a soul's enjoying communion with Him who is light. The exercise thereof is also essential to the maintenance of that communion, for where ill will is cherished against a fellow saint the Holy Spirit is grieved and communion with God is hindered. In verse 9 the existence and exercise of brotherly love is made a test of our being in the light, but in verse 10 it is both the effect and the means of continuing therein. As Robert S. Candlish (1806-1873) also pointed out, "The law of action and reaction is here very noticeable. Being in the light begets brotherly love. Brotherly love secures abiding in the light. For this brotherly love is love to the true light shining in my brother as in Christ. And such love to the true light, wherever and in whomsoever it is seen shining, as it shines in Christ, must needs cause me to grow up more and more into the true light, to grow up into Christ." Our affections ever follow our apprehensions, for the heart is reached via the mind, and therefore the measure of our love makes manifest the measure of our spiritual light.

It is no mere verbal claim which is here made, but something that speaks louder than words. It is far more than the use of endearing expressions by the lips being seen and felt in deeds. It is a real, active, benevolent affection, which suffers nothing in its object to quench the same. As hatred is a malignant disposition which fills with ill will against another, so love is a frame of mind that produces respect and esteem for another. As hatred is a murderous lust which seeks to injure, love is a principle which aims at the good of its object. That which is here in view is not a natural trait, but a spiritual grace, yea, the queen of the Christian graces. It is exercised in a great variety of ways: ministering to the body, comforting the mind, promoting the welfare of the soul. It is expressed in practical forms, as far as lies within the power of its possessor. Thus it supplies an external evidence of the inward reality of a real Christian profession, for such outgoings of good will fall more or less under the notice and observation of fellow saints.

"*He that loveth his brother*" for Christ's sake, and for what he sees of Christ in him, loves him sincerely and cordially—"abideth in the light." What a high commendation of brotherly love is this! He who freely expresses Christian affection unto fellow believers supplies clear evidence that he is a born-again person, in fellowship with God, for out of love to Him issues love to His children. Not only so, but he gives proof that he is walking according to the principles of the Gospel, that he is vitally influenced by the truth he professes, for holy love unto the brethren is a sure criterion of spiritual illumination. Without it he who speaks with tongues is as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Why so? Because unless love inspires my testimony it brings no gain to those who hear it, but is lost on the air. One might be endowed with the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, be possessed of all knowledge, yet if he be devoid of love he is "nothing"—a spiritual cipher, contributing naught unto the edification of his brethren. Therefore his most imposing deeds will receive no reward in the day to come.

In that thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians a most sublime description is given of the nature, characteristics and workings of this holy and heavenly love. It is patient and forbear-

ing toward its objects, refusing to take offence at a frown or word. It suffers long and is kind, being neither easily irritated nor repulsed by ingratitude. It is humble and lowly, for it neither envies the prosperity of others nor is puffed up by its own performances. It is unselfish and disinterested: "I seek not yours, but you" (2Co 12:14) is ever its aim. It "thinketh no evil," harbouring no doubts or suspicions, but places the best construction upon the words and actions of others. It rejoices not in iniquity but rather is grieved when the sins of a brother are apparent. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8:7), for that love which is the fruit of the Spirit "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Such is this spiritual love in the abstract, and such is it concretely in its manifestations. Yet it requires to be borne in mind that 1 Corinthians 13 takes no notice of the hindrances which the Christian meets with in the exercise of his love from the workings of the flesh within him or from the opposition of the devil and his agents from without. Light is pure and radiant, but when it shines through a defective medium its beams are blurred. Fire burns and is hot, but when it encounters that which is wet and damp its action is checked. What love consists of in itself is one thing, the allowances which have to be made for our natural make-up, and especially for indwelling corruptions, are quite another. On the one hand we must not deny the fact that, so great is the change which divine grace effects in its subjects, it is likened unto the wolf being fitted to dwell with the lamb, the leopard lying down with the kid, the young lion and the fatling together (Isa 11:6); and on the other hand we are not to ignore the fact that the regenerate require to be exhorted: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph 4:31)—set aside whatever corrodes your own mind or wounds the feelings of others.

Let not the reader forget what was pointed out in the preceding chapter on the first clause of the second half of verse 8, according as its verb admits of a twofold rendition—as the translators of the Authorized Version gave it: "because the darkness is past," and "the world passeth away" (verse 17); the former having a dispensational reference to the relative darkness of the Mosaic economy, the symbols and ceremonies of the Levitical system having become obsolete now that they are made good in their antitypes; the latter rendering possessing a practical allusion to the experience of God's children. Though there still be much darkness in them, and though they are more or less influenced by the darkness now surrounding them, nevertheless, as they grow in grace, and in proportion as they enter into God's best for them, the darkness is passing and their path shines more and more unto the perfect day. Yet that perfect day is still future, and so is that complete conformity unto Christ which shall then be the condition of all the redeemed. Meanwhile the flesh opposes and none remains in the light fully and without intermission, and therefore none loves his brother perfectly. But as there ought to be an increase in knowledge and faith, so of love and all other graces.

It is just here that we see again the intimate relation between light and love. When my love to God cools and my communion with Him is broken, then affection for my brethren is proportionately affected. As Candlish pointed out, "It is in the darkness that injuries are brooded over and angry passions are nursed. If you, brother, and I are at variance, it is almost certain to be because there is some darkness about us that hinders us from seeing one

another clearly. Let in the light. Let us see one another clearly. Differences between us may still remain, our views on many things may still be as wide as the poles asunder, but we see that we are men of like passions and like appetites with one another. The light shows us we are true brethren in spite of all." When love be in a healthy and vigorous state, we are far from taking offence at the manifestations of the flesh in a brother: rather will such move us to pray more earnestly for his refining and growth. Nothing is a more practical proof of love than to make supplication for those who slight and injure us; nothing is better evidence that we are in the light.

Our verse adds a further commendation or mentions yet an-other advantage resulting from the exercise of brotherly love: "and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." Not only does the expressing of this spiritual grace supply an evidence of regeneration, and is a means for maintaining our communion with God, but it also preserves from scandalous conduct. He who habitually shows himself disposed to goodness and mercy, and manifests a generous and self-denying affection unto his brethren, demonstrates that he is vitally influenced by the principles of the Gospel. True love will move us to dread everything which would hinder the spirituality of others, and therefore takes care to avoid what would be a stumblingblock to them. The Greek word for "occasion of stumbling" is *skandalos*, from which is derived our English word "scandal," which primarily means a snare laid for an enemy. It is rendered "stumblingblock" in Romans 11:9; 1 Corinthians 1:23; Revelation 2:14; and nine times is translated "offence," as in Matthew 16:23; Romans 9:33; Galatians 5:11. The general prevailing disposition of such a one's heart will prevent Satan successfully tempting him to the commission of any gross sin, and his deportment will be such that his fellows will not be evilly influenced by him.

There can be little doubt that when John penned the second half of verse 10 there was before his mind the closing part of Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them," for his words tally exactly with the Septuagint translation of that verse, except that the apostle changes the plural "them" to him. Spiritual love is a wonderful preservative from and preventive of injuries. Those who love God's Law not only have "great peace" in their consciences and minds (for where the affections be set upon things above, the heart is content with whatever be its portion on earth), but "nothing shall offend," or as the margin of Psalm 119:165, reads, "they shall have no stumblingblock"—nothing in God's providential dealings will scandalize them. Those who love God's Law are kept from the snares and temptations which the world is so full of, and which bring about the sin and ruin of so many. In the same way, genuine love unto the brethren induces a circumspect walk, delivering from those carnal and satanic pitfalls, because the light in which such affection dwells enables them to see and shun what would be an occasion of falling unto them.

Offences or scandals are of various kinds. Very often offence is taken where none is given. An outstanding example of this is Christ Himself. He is unto the believer "a cornerstone, elect and precious," but to the unbelieving and disobedient "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (1Pe 2:8). Such He was unto the Jews, for His humble appearance was a scandal to them: though He was exactly what their own Scriptures had foretold, yet He was not according to their ideas of what the Messiah should be and do. Christ crucified is still a stumblingblock to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness (1Co 1:23). So too His

doctrine was far from being agreeable to them: "the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying" (Mat 15:12), and murmured when He declared "I am the bread which came down from heaven" (Joh 6:41). Some of His own disciples complained "This is a hard saying," so that He asked them "Doth this offend you?" And many of them "went back, and walked no more with him." Much of the doctrine of Scripture is still a stumblingblock to the proud and self-willed. The simplicity and spirituality of that worship which alone is acceptable with God is despised by those who crave pomp and pageantry. Yet such offence is causeless, arising solely from human depravity.

But there is also offence given where none is taken. Thus when Peter sought to dissuade Christ from His sufferings, He said "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me" (Mat 16:23)—not that Christ was stumbled thereby, for His heart was immune to evil counsel and to the infection of evil example. From the language of Hebrews 11:24-26, it is clear that Moses was upbraided for turning his back upon such a "golden opportunity," and was severely censured because when he came of age, he "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; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." The godly are unmoved by the world's scorn, for they have respect unto a recompense greater than anything it can offer them. So too David, instead of being scandalized by the impiety of those surrounding him, and following their wicked course, exclaimed, "They have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." (Psa 119:126-127). They who dwell in the light can see honour in disgrace, and beauty in the very things of God most despised by their fellows.

There are two principal things which the devil employs as scandals or stumblingblocks to the saints: the persecutions and the enticements of the world—the one working on their sensibilities, the other on their lusts. By frowns and terrors of the world Satan seeks to draw us to think hardly of God and dislike the path of holiness. Therefore is it said concerning him, "whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1Pe 5:9). His temptations to the godly are often conveyed by afflictions from the unregenerate, seeking by means thereof to prevail with them to relinquish their Christian duties and grow weary of the ways of God. These tend the more to succeed if he can persuade them that they are the only sufferers. But there is no excuse for God's people being deceived by such a lie, for there is much in the Scriptures which is designed to remove from us the fear of the world, and to comfort us in trials and tribulations for Christ's sake, and such passages would be neither pertinent nor serviceable if there were no persecutions for the godly to endure.

The allurements of the world are more dangerous than its oppositions. Though at first the Lord's people may be discouraged and dismayed when meeting with unfriendliness from the enemies of Christ, yet "God giveth more grace," and patience and fortitude from Him enable them to hold on their way. But the seductive snares of the world and its flesh-attractive baits do not drive the saints to their knees and cast them upon God as do its cruel slights and threatenings. Present and visible things have a far greater attraction than future and invisible ones unto all except the spiritual. Paul had to lament, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2Ti 4:10), and in all generations the servants of God have had to taste the same bitter experience. It is by the baits of sense that the majority of

our fellows are prejudiced against the strictness of the Gospel's requirements, and a base opinion of the same is nourished in their hearts by the knowledge that such clashes with their own lusts. Esau preferred the gratification of his fleshly affections to the blessing of the Lord. How the exercise of brotherly love preserves from such snares will be more definitely pointed out in our next.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

72. Spoils of Victory

When Joshua had become old and more or less enfeebled, the Lord appeared unto His servant, and after informing him that there remained yet very much land to be possessed, and naming some of the places and peoples to be conquered, He declared, "*Them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee*" (13:6). It had been so with Moses. Under God, he had begun the task of occupying Canaan (namely that part thereof which lay to the east of Jordan), but only a small beginning had been made. Joshua had been used to carry forward the enterprise considerably, yet it was far from being completed—others would be raised up later to effect the divine purpose. And it has been the same ever since. A start was all that was made by the apostles in the evangelizing of the Gentiles, for when the last of them expired, there remained yet very much land to be possessed. Calvin and Martin Luther (1483-1546) were mightily employed in delivering God's people from the deadly shackles of Rome. Yet when the last of the Reformers was called home, how much yet remained to be accomplished.

It is the same now. At the close of the most active and self-sacrificing life in the service of Christ, each succeeding minister of His leaves this scene with very much of the world still occupied by the enemy. But observe now the blessed consolation the Lord gave unto Joshua, "Them will I drive out," *not* "from before *thee*," for he would not live to see it accomplished, but "from before the children of Israel." As he had carried forward the work begun by Moses, so others would be divinely appointed and equipped to advance his efforts—the honour of laying the capstone thereon being reserved for David centuries later. A similar assurance should be the very real confidence of every aged minister of the Gospel. There is no statement in Scripture, so far as the writer can perceive, to show that a time will ever come when all upon earth will be saved, or even nominally receive the truth. Yet the divine promise is given, "One generation *shall* praise thy works to another" (Psa 145:4); yea, that some "shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout *all* generations" (Psa 72:5). The words of Christ in Matthew 28:20 make it clear that He will have some of His on earth till the last, and His "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (Joh 6:37) proves that neither man nor devil will prevent the salvation of the entire election of grace. "The foundation of God standeth sure...The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2Ti 2:19) provides a grand haven of rest for every anxious heart.

“Them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites” (verse 6). We regard this statement as one with a clearly implied proviso attached to it, and as such, addressed to their responsibility, presupposing *their concurrence*. Therefore we agree with Matthew Henry’s (1662-1714) comments thereon, “This promise that He would drive them out from before the children of Israel plainly supposes it as the condition of the promise that the children of Israel themselves must attempt and endeavour their extirpation, must go up against them, else they could not be said to be driven out before them. If afterwards, through sloth or cowardice or affection to these idolaters, they sat still and let them alone, they must blame themselves, and not God, if they be not driven out.” Nor was that Puritan alone in so understanding those words of the Lord. Even the high Calvinist John Gill (1697-1771) remarked thereon, “Which the Lord would deliver into their hands, *providing* they were obedient to His will, for, because they were not, many of those places never came into their possession, though divided to them by lot”; and again (later), “that is on condition of their obedience, for it appears that not only the Sidonians but many others, even the chief, and most of those mentioned, were never possessed by them.”

The same is true of Christians and their eternal inheritance. There are certain *conditions* which they are obligated to meet. “Conditions,” not in the Romish sense, as con-causes with the Father’s choice and the Son’s atonement, nor in the Arminian sense, of an absolute power lying in their own wills and strength to comply therewith. But according to the order of things which God has established, for the enforcing of their moral agency—as there must be a sowing before reaping, the cross before the crown. Principal causes (God’s grace and Christ’s merits) do not exclude necessary means—grace must not be turned into lasciviousness nor Christ made the minister of sin. Scripture is unmistakably plain on this point, “For we are made partakers of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb 3:14, and note well the “if” in Joh 8:51; 1Co 15:2; Col 1:23). As remission of sins is promised to none but those who repent (Luk 24:47; Act 3:19) and believe (Act 10:43), so only he that endures to the end shall be saved (Mat 24:13). “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest [the antitypical Canaan], lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb 4:11), as the Israelites in the wilderness. That warning is a *real* one, which we ignore at our eternal peril.

“Only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites...as I have commanded thee” (13:6). This was the business in which Joshua was now to engage—to apportion *it*—the entire territory, both what was already subdued and those parts of it which still remained to be conquered. “Now *therefore* divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh, with whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan eastward” (verses 7-8). Having received orders and authority from God, Joshua was to set about this task at once with all diligence. He was not to wait until all the tribes had actually secured their inheritance, but must define or mark out the portion allotted to each of them, so that they might know the particular section to which he had divine title, and go forward, take and occupy the same. Thus Joshua was to act with full confidence in God. Though he should be called to leave the field of battle and enter his rest, others would be raised up to carry on the conflict until the divine purpose was realized. *This*, we say again, needs to be borne in mind by the Lord’s people

in all generations, for considerable *unbelief* is often mingled with their grief when some much-used servant of His is removed from this world—as though the cause of Christ was jeopardized thereby.

Once more Joshua was to count implicitly upon JEHOVAH, to work while it was yet day for him, and to leave the outcome to his Master. Probably the major part of the land was then occupied by the Canaanites, yet he was personally to superintend the allotting of the whole of it to Israel. Thus was he called upon to trust in the Lord with all his heart, and lean not unto his own understanding (Pro 3:5), as had Noah and Abraham before him (Heb 11:7-8). *That* is the principle by which every servant of God is ever to act. As Paul declared, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Co 5:7). The apostle and his fellow workers lived and labored by faith, being inspired with courage and strength from having their hearts occupied with things invisible. Theirs was not a single act, but a constant course of trustfulness. To walk by faith is to conduct ourselves in the firm belief of those things we do not see, resting on the sure Word of God, and being practically influenced thereby. It is to live in a steady expectation of things to come—the realities and glories of heaven. It is the opposite of being governed by our senses or regulated by visible objects, for “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1), making them real and precious to the soul.

It was at this point that the predecessor of Joshua had failed—though, through not linking up parallel passages with Numbers 13:1-3, many have not perceived this—another case where Scripture must be compared with Scripture if we are to obtain the complete picture. “And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you” and sent them forth (Deu 1:22-23). Those words seem to make two things quite evident. First, that this project originated with the people. Second, that Moses failed to discern the distrust which prompted their proposal—his approval thereof being a case of evil communications corrupting good manners. At a later date, when chiding the children of Gad and of Reuben, he said, “Wherefore *discourage* ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them? Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land” (Num 32:7-8), which shows they had a spirit of unwillingness to go up into it.

From the account given in Numbers 13:17-20, we learn that they questioned the value of the promised inheritance, as the language “see the land, what it is...whether it be good or bad...whether it be fat or lean” makes clear. Thus it was rank unbelief in the word of the Lord which lay behind their policy, while their “by what way we must go up” of Deuteronomy 1:22, showed their lack of confidence in being divinely directed as to the best route to take. What need was there to go and examine the kind of land which the Lord had chosen for them, when He had already informed them that it was one “flowing with milk and honey” (Exo 3:8)? What occasion was there to investigate the approaches into it when there were the pillars of cloud and of fire to guide and show them the way? Nor have we any need to ask what God’s will for us is, when He has already made known the same, or to inquire as to our path of duty, when we possess His Word as a lamp unto our feet (Psa

119:105). But alas, Israel had a better opinion of their own policy and judgment than of God's; and is it not often the same with us?

Though approving of the carnal suggestion of the people, before acting on the same, Moses evidently sought confirmation from the Lord, and we are told that He said, "Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan" (Num 13:2). In thus giving permission, God acted *in judgment*. Deuteronomy 1:6-8 makes it clear that a year previously, Israel had received divine orders to go forward and possess the land which had been given unto their fathers, but as soon as they left Horeb, one sin after another was committed by them (Num 11 and 12). God had been provoked by their waywardness, and in order to make further manifest the hardness of their hearts, He now gave them up to their lusts. The sequel at once demonstrated their unbelief and perversity. God also suffered their desire to be granted in order to serve as a solemn *warning* to His people in all generations. If we profit not from the recorded sins and punishments of others, then is our case indeed inexcusable. When God gratifies our self-will and suffers us to follow the schemes of our own devising, we pay dearly for it. If we have more confidence in our own wisdom or the representations of our senses than we have in the divine counsels, we shall inevitably taste the bitterness of our foolishness.

It seems rather strange that, after a full description of the territory given to the two and a half tribes had previously been furnished in the closing verses of Numbers 32, the middle of Deuteronomy 3, a briefer reference in Deuteronomy 29, and a fuller one again in Joshua 12:4-6, a further account of the same should be *repeated here*. Matthew Henry suggested the following explanation. First, as the reason why the nine and a half tribes should now be assigned their portions, since their brethren had already been provided for, it was just and meet that they should be so too. Second, as the pattern for Joshua now to follow. He was not being ordered to do something unprecedented, for he had been personally present when Moses had distributed the eastern section of Palestine unto the two and a half tribes, and from his example, he might well now act. Third, as an inducement unto Joshua to make no delay in performing this task, that the remaining tribes might no longer be kept out of their heritage. Thus the Lord who had provided for the former was equally solicitous about the welfare of the latter. Fourth, that the portion given to the two and a half tribes years before, now being specified in detail, signified a ratification of the original grant, thus obviating any disputes about the boundaries. Joshua was not free to make any alterations.

The account given of the portions allocated unto the two and a half tribes closes with the ominous statement, "*Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshuities, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshuities and Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day*" (verse 13). This is the first time that anything of this nature is recorded of them, though if we are permitted to go through the book of Judges, we shall see that other of the tribes were equally remiss at a later date. It reminds us of a similar and most regrettable failure on the part of Queen Elizabeth and those who succeeded her. Under the Reformation in the days of Luther and Calvin, the Protestant sections of Europe were delivered from the idolatries of the mass, Mariolatry and the worship of idols; but those who followed were found sadly wanting in purging themselves from other popish evils and superstitions. It is worthy of note that as the two and a half tribes were placed in their inheritance before their fellows, so (centuries later) they were displaced before the other

tribes were, being carried captive to Assyria, and that because they “went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land” (1Ch 5:25-26). Such a proportion does Providence often observe in the dispensations of prosperity and adversity, setting the one over against the other.

“Balaam also the son of Besor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them” (13:23). Nothing definite is known about the early life of this mysterious person. He is introduced abruptly in the Scriptures, being mentioned first in Numbers 22:5. A “soothsayer” was one who essayed to foretell the future and possessed strange powers by means of the occult forces of evil. Balaam was a magician of renown and had, apparently, acquired some knowledge of the true God—probably by hearing of what He had wrought in Egypt and at the Red Sea (see Jos 2:10). Israel had then crossed the wilderness, and had arrived at the country of the Moabites, in the vicinity of the Jordan. Balak, its king, was afraid that Israel would destroy his people, and sent for Balaam to use his enchantments against them. Accordingly, his servants visited the prophet “with the rewards of divination in their hand,” and invited him to return with them to their master, and pronounce such a curse on the Israelites that the Moabites might smite them (Num 22:5-7). Balaam’s character was at once revealed by his response to this temptation. He neither accepted nor refused. Instead of reprimanding them, he bade them lodge with him, and he would return his answer next morning.

During the night, God appeared to him, and said, “Thou shalt *not* go with them: thou shalt not curse the people.” Next morning, Balaam informed his visitors, “The LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you,” and they departed without him, though he dishonestly failed to tell them *why* he must not accept their commission. Refusing to be discouraged by Balaam’s repulse, Balak sent again to him, promising to promote him with very great honour if he would come and curse Israel. Though he knew the mind of the Lord, he temporized and invited the princes to stay with him that night. Prompted by the love of gain, he now mocked God by pretending to ask His permission—as though He might change His mind; and God now mocked him, giving him leave to go, but commanding him to utter only the word He gave him. This is evident from “And God’s anger was kindled because he went,” and from “The angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him” (Num 22:22).

Rebuked by the dumb ass and told by the angel, “I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me,” Balaam acknowledged his sin. Yet when the word, “Go with the men” was given to test him further, he was carried forward against all checks by the violent impulse of his lusts. When he arrived at his destination, so powerfully did the Spirit of God restrain, that Balaam blessed Israel instead of cursing them. Nevertheless, so strongly did he love “the wages of unrighteousness” (2Pe 2:15), and so determined was he to earn the same, that he now devised a method which promised to ensure the ruin of Israel (Num 31:16 and cf. Rev 2:14), and which had been completely successful had not God intervened (Psa 106:28-29). Thus did he definitely range himself against Israel and defy the Lord. Soon after he reaped what he had sown. Linking his interests with the Moabites and Midianites, he died with them (Num 22:7; 31:8). Such is the doom of the double-hearted, and those who are in bondage to covetousness. None can serve God and mammon.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

8. *Its Extent, Part 2*

Let us now define our terms more closely, and thus prevent anyone arguing with us at cross purposes. Our English word “depraved” is taken from *depravatus*, which means twisted, wrenched from the straight line, and thus moral disturbance—its root being *præ-vus*, “crooked,” “bad.” Total depravity connotes that this distortedness has affected the whole of man’s being to such an extent that he has no inherent power of recovery left to restore himself to harmony with God, and that this is the case with *every* member of the human race. Yet “total depravity” does not import that sin has reached its highest intensity in a person, so that it is incapable of augmentation, for men add unto their sins (1Sa 12:19); and over and above their native spiritual blindness, God judicially blinds some (Joh 12:40), and then their doom is irrevocably sealed. No, fallen man does not enter this world as bad as he can be, but he has “*no* good thing” in him (Rom 7:18); instead, he is wholly corrupt, entirely vitiated throughout his constitution.

The children of Adam are possessed of no degree of moral rectitude, but have hearts that are desperately wicked. In so affirming, we are but saying that the effect corresponds to the cause—as the apostasy of the first man was total, so his descendants are wholly sinful. That this *is* the case with all mankind was clearly and abundantly proved from Scripture in the preceding article. The entire corruption of the whole human race could not be stated more strongly and decisively than in the passages there cited. The natural man has not one iota of holiness in him, rather is he born with the seeds of every form of evil, radically inclined to sin. In our nature, we are vileness itself, black as hell, and unless a miracle of grace be wrought upon us, we must inevitably be damned for all eternity. It is not that man has a few imperfections, but that he is altogether polluted—“an unclean thing,” with “*no* soundness” in him (Isa 1:6). Not only has man no holiness, but his heart is inveterately averse thereto.

The solemn doctrine of total depravity does *not* mean that there are no parents with a genuine love for their children, and no children who respectfully obey their parents; that there are none imbued with a spirit of benevolence to the poor and kindly sympathy unto the suffering; that there are no conscientious employers or honest employees. But it *does* mean that, where the unregenerate are concerned, those duties are discharged *without* any love for God, any subjection to His authority, or any concern for His glory. Parents are required to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and children to obey their parents in the Lord (Eph 6:1, 4), while servants are bidden to serve their masters “in singleness of heart, as unto Christ” (Eph 6:5). Do the unconverted so act and render compliance with those injunctions? They do not, and therefore their performances not only possess no spiritual value, but are polluted. Every act performed by the natural man is faulty, “The plowing of the wicked is sin” (Pro 21:4)—because done for selfish ends. Then

better not plough at all? Wrong, for slothfulness is equally sinful! There are different degrees of enormity, but *every* act of man is sinful.

The condition of the natural man is such that in the discharge of his first responsibility unto his Maker, he is utterly recreant. His chief obligation is to live unto the glory of God and to love Him with all his heart, but while he remains unrenewed, he has not the least spiritual, holy, true love unto Him. Whatever there may be in his domestic and social conduct which is admirable in the eyes of his fellows, it is not prompted by any respect for the divine will. So far as man's self-recovery and self-recuperation be concerned, his depravity is total, in the sense of being decisive and final. "Man is fallen. Every part and passion of his nature is perverted. He has gone astray altogether, is sick from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet; yea, is dead in trespasses and sins and corrupt before God. O pride of human nature, we plough right over thee! The hemlock standing in thy field must be cut up by the roots. Thy weeds seem like fair flowers, but the ploughshare must go right through them, till all thy beauty is shown to be a painted Jezebel, and all human glorying a bursting bubble" (C. H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

What makes this awful view of man's total depravity yet more solemn is the fact that there is no exception to it, for it is *universal*. Corrupt nature is the same in all. The hand that writes these lines is as capable of perpetrating the foulest crime on the calendar, and the heart of the reader of devising the worst deed committed by the vilest wretch who ever lived. The only distinction of character between man and man is that which the sovereign power and grace of God effects. "We are *all* as an unclean thing" (Isa 64:6), our original purity gone. "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." In his comments on Romans 3:10-18, John Calvin said, "In this terrible manner, the apostle inveighs not against particular individuals, but against all the posterity of Adam. He does not declaim against the depraved manners of one or another age, but accuses the perpetual corruption of our nature. For his design in that passage is not simply to rebuke men in order that they may repent, but rather to teach us that all men are overwhelmed with an inevitable calamity, from which they can never emerge unless they are extricated by the mercy of God."

When the Lord Jesus called Paul, He informed him that He was about to send him to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Act 26:18). In those words Christ indicated what was the character of the whole Gentile world. They were all as ignorant of God, and of the way of acceptance with Him, as blind men are of the true objects of sight. True, there were then, as now, devout religionists, esteemed poets and boastful philosophers who gloried in their wisdom, professing to teach what was the true happiness of man. There were renowned sages, with innumerable disciples, whose schools were engaged solely with the study of virtue, knowledge and felicity. Nevertheless, "The world by wisdom knew not God," and He declared, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1Co 1), for it deceived and deluded them. The schools themselves were darkness, and the minds of their authors—men like Pythagoras and Plato, Socrates and Aristotle—"blinded by the god of this world," completely under the control of the devil.

“The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God” (Psa 14:2). “Behold the eyes of Omniscience ransacking the globe, and prying among every people and nation. He who is looking down knows the good, is quick to discern it, would be delighted to find it; but as He views all the unregenerate children of men, His search is fruitless, for of all the race of Adam no unrenewed soul is other than an enemy to God and goodness. ‘They are all gone out of the way’ (Rom 3:12). Without exception, all men have apostatized from the Lord their Maker, from His laws, and from the eternal principles of right. Like stubborn heifers, they have sturdily refused to receive the yoke. The original speaks of the race as a totality, humanity as a whole has become depraved in heart and life. ‘They have altogether become filthy’ (Psa 14:3). As a whole, they are spoiled and soured like corrupt leaven, or, as some put it, they have become putrid and even stinking. The only reason why we do not more clearly see this foulness is because we are accustomed to it, just as those who work daily among offensive odours at last cease to smell them” (Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*).

That terrible indictment, “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7), is not restricted to particularly reprobate persons, but is an unqualified statement which applies to every individual. It is “*the carnal mind*”—whatsoever mind may properly be designated “carnal,” i.e. natural, unspiritual. The undeveloped mind of the infant is “enmity against God.” Moreover, that description is true at all times, though it is not equally so evident. But though the wolf may sleep, he *is* a wolf still. The snake which lurks amid the flowers is just as deadly as when it lies among noxious weeds. Furthermore, that solemn declaration holds good of the whole mind, of all its faculties. It is true of the memory. Nursery rhymes, silly jokes, and foolish songs are retained without effort, whereas passages of Scripture and spiritual sermons are quickly forgotten. It is so with the affections. The creature is idolized and the Creator slighted. So of the judgment. What erroneous conceptions it forms of the deity and how fearfully it wrests His Word! It is true even of the conscience, for there have been those who, while killing the saints, thought they did God a service (Joh 16:2)—witness Saul of Tarsus.

As might well be expected, fierce opposition has been made against this flesh-withering truth of the total depravity of man, and ever will be where it is faithfully preached. When men are informed that they are suffering from something far more serious than a defect in their characters or an unhappy bias of disposition, namely that their very *nature* is rotten to the core, it is more than human pride can endure. When told that the centre of their moral being is corrupt, that their heart—the potent fountain from which issue their desires and thoughts—is desperately wicked, that it is inherently and radically evil from the first moment of their existence, hot resentment is at once aroused. It is indeed awful to contemplate that not only is sin the element in which the natural man lives, but the whole of his life is one unmingled course of evil; and it is scarcely surprising that those who are not subject to the Word of truth should revolt at such a concept, especially as it is contrary to what appears in not a few characters who must be respected for many amiable qualities. Nevertheless, since all sin be a coming short of the glory of God, then every act of fallen man has in it the nature of sin.

Even with Christendom, this doctrine has been strongly and steadily resisted. The great controversy between Augustine and Pelagius in the fifth century turned upon whether that

moral corruption which pertains to all mankind be total or partial. If the latter, then of course it follows that man still has within him something which is good, something which is accordant to the divine Law, something which enables him at least partly to discharge the obligations lying upon him as a creature of God. Ever since the days of Augustine, there have been those posing as Christians who, while acknowledging that man is a fallen and depraved creature, have flatly denied that he is *totally* depraved. Those who repudiate the inward and invincible call of the Spirit realize not the actual state of man's soul, nor perceive that a miracle of grace is necessary before he is made willing to comply with the demands of the Gospel. Arminians acknowledge the *aid* of the Spirit, but at once negative their admission by affirming that He can be successfully resisted after He has put forth all His efforts to woo the sinner unto Christ.

It is important to recognize that the principles of faith and love are not produced by mere moral suasion, by the external presentation of Christ to a person. Rather are they wrought by a miracle of divine power and grace in the soul. Such a glorious work must be done by an efficient cause, and not be an allicient one. The natural man is blind, yea, dead, to spiritual things, and what suasion can make the blind to see or the dead to act? Suasion is so far from giving a faculty that it presupposes one. The use of it is not to confer a power, but to stir and move it to act. God is far more than an Orator beseeching men, namely a mighty Operator quickening. His word of power is a commanding one. As He said, "Let light be," and there was light, so He calls for a new heart and brings it into existence. God is no mere Helper, but a Creator. "We are his workmanship" (Eph 2:10), and not our own. It is God who makes us new creatures, and not we ourselves, "born not...of the will of man, but of God" (Joh 1:13). To say that we are in part born of our own wills is to blaspheme the Author of our spiritual being, and to place the crown on nature instead of grace.

Likewise does the evolutionist emphatically deny the total depravity of man, for the only fall he believes in is an upward one. He is loud in insisting that there is a divine spark of life in the soul of every human being, burning very feebly it may be in some, yet capable of being fanned into a flame if the right influences be brought to bear upon it. A divine "seed" of goodness others term it, a seed which only needs cultivating in order to the ultimate development of a noble and virtuous character—a blank repudiation of the teaching of Christ that the human tree is essentially "corrupt." Now, since the whole system of redemption rests upon this basic fact of man's total depravity, and since every false system of religion originates in the repudiation thereof, it is incumbent upon us to expose the fallacy of those objections which are commonly made against it, the principal ones of which we will now consider.

The first is an attempt to show that we do not enter this world in a defiled condition. The engaging simplicity, dependence, and harmlessness of little ones is dwelt upon, and reference is even made unto Scripture in support of the contention that they are born in a state of innocence. But this need not detain us very long, for it scarcely presents even an apparent force. Appeal is made to, "And shed *innocent* blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan" (Psa 106:38). Which simply means they sacrificed their little ones, who had *not* been active participants in their idolatry. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil," (Rom 9:11) is nothing to the point, for those words refer not to their nature, but to a time before

they committed any deeds. While in contrast with adults, infants possess a relative innocence, in that they are guiltless of personal transgressions, yet that they partake of original sin is clear from Psalms 51:5; 58:3; Proverbs 22:15. Scripture never contradicts itself.

In rebuttal of this doctrine, it is insisted that there is some good in the very worst, that even the most confirmed villains, though it be but momentarily, turn away shudderingly from certain deeds of wickedness when temptation unto the same is first presented to them. From that the conclusion is drawn that, deeply buried under the ashes of a life of unbridled crime, the sparks of some power of goodness still remain. But that is to confound the faint motions of man's moral nature with potential spirituality. Moreover, it is nothing but confusion of thought which leads people to infer that because there are degrees of wickedness there must still be a modicum of good. Because one stage of depravity is lower than another, this does not warrant us to deny that the first stage is degraded. The development of wickedness is one thing, the presence of any measure of holiness or virtue is another. The absence of certain forms of sins does not imply any innate purity. It might as well be affirmed that a recent corpse, which is less loathsome, is thereof *less dead* than one which is far gone in decay and putrefaction.

Not a few have argued that the *strivings of conscience* in the unregenerate demonstrate that they are not totally depraved. It is pointed out that every man is possessed of that faculty which bears witness within him in countless instances of what is right and wrong. That this inward monitor exerts considerable influence even on wicked men, so as to impel them to the performance of actions which are relatively good, and to deter them from others which are evil. That is freely admitted, but it makes nothing whatever against the truth we are here contending for. In the first place, while conscience be necessary to the performance of both good and evil, it does not itself partake of either the one or the other, for it is that part of the mind which takes cognizance of the virtue or vice of our actions, but is itself quite distinct from both. It is that ethical instinct which passes judgment upon the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our desires and deeds. The conscience itself needs instructing, for its dictates go no farther than the knowledge it possesses. It does not *reveal* anything, but simply declares the character of what is presented to the mind's eye, and that according to the light it has.

It is important that we should be quite clear upon this point. The conscience is not in itself a standard of duty, for that of the heathen speaks very differently from that of a Christian who is taught by the Holy Spirit. It is an ear to hear, and the character of *what* it hears—whether true or false—is the measure of its intelligence. In proportion as this inward eye is tutored will be the truthfulness of its perceptions. The term defines itself: *conscience*, with knowledge—to know with oneself—informing and impressing us with the difference between good and evil. But since all duty consists of and is contained in *love* (unto God and our neighbour), then good and evil must consist entirely in the *disposition of the heart*. And the mere dictates of conscience including no such dispositions, then neither good nor evil can, strictly speaking, be predicated of those dictates. Both men and demons will for ever possess consciences witnessing to them what is good and evil, even in hell itself—being “the worm that dieth not”—when, as all must allow, they will be utterly destitute of any virtue or goodness. We do indeed read in God's Word of a good conscience and an evil one, and so too we read of “an evil eye.” Yet there is neither good nor

evil in the sight of the eye, only as it is under the influence of a holy or unholy disposition of the soul. So it is with the dictates of the conscience.

The conscience, then, bears solemn witness unto the loss of man's purity and the presence of depravity. But to regard the resistance which conscience makes to each successive stage of sin as an evidence of innate goodness asserting itself is to ignore the very real distinction there is between the authority of conscience and a soul's love for God. The conscience certainly remonstrates and enforces the right in the form of an unconditional and absolute imposition. It also threatens man with the destruction of his peace if he persists in his course of wrongdoing. But that remonstrance and threatening comes to him as a *restraint*, as a force, as something against which the current of his soul is set. There is no love for God in it, no respect to His will as declared by it, no regard for His honour. The struggle is not between good and evil (as *is* the case in a saint), but between sinful inclination and positive prohibition. To know duty and yet be reluctant to perform it is no evidence of any goodness of heart. Even to find satisfaction in the performing of duty at the dictate of conscience argues no complacency whatever in God Himself.

Let it be clearly understood that the conflicts which the natural man experiences are most certainly not between any love he has for God, and the inordinate desires of his fallen nature, but rather between his conscience and his lusts; and that any remorse which he may suffer is not sorrow for having offended his Maker, but a vexation under the sense of his degradation, which is naught but the injury done to his pride. There is no grief before God for having been a reproach unto Him. Nor does the wretchedness which dissipation produces in any wise dispose its subject unto a more favourable reception of the Gospel. The groaning under the chains which sinful habits forge, and the sighing for deliverance therefrom, are not longings to be freed from sin, but rather desires to escape from its painful consequences, both to the conscience and to the body. It is mental tranquility and physical health that are coveted, and not the approbation of the Lord. Any misery suffered by the natural man is not from having offended God, but because he cannot defy Him with impunity and immunity. None but the Holy Spirit can produce a hatred of sin *as sin*, for that is something the conscience never does.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 13

19. *The Holy Spirit's use of words.* The correct interpretation of many passages can be satisfactorily established only by a careful investigation of how their terms are employed by the sacred writers, for not a few of them possess an entirely different force from their dictionary meanings. The signification of the words of Holy Writ is to be determined neither by their etymology nor by the sense which they bear in classical writings, but rather by their actual *use* in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures—with the collateral help of the Septu-

agint version. Each term must be defined in strict harmony with the sense given to it in the Word itself.

It is because the average reader of the Bible interprets much of its language in accord with how the same is employed in the common speech of his fellows that he has an inadequate, and often degrading, concept of its expressions. The concordance will stand him in far better stead than the best dictionary. Take the word “chasten.” Upon human lips, it means to punish, but such is far from the thought when we read of God’s using the rod upon His children—even “for correction” falls far short. *Paideia* is only another form of *paidon*, which signifies “young children” (Joh 21:5). One can see at a glance the direct connection which exists between “disciple” and “discipline”. Equally clear in the Greek is the relation between “chasten” and “child”—*son-training* expresses it more accurately (Heb 12:7).

Consider the grand truth and glorious privilege of *adoption*. Probably it is not going too far to say that only a very small percentage of Christians entertain any scriptural concept thereof. In human affairs, it has reference to a procedure whereby a boy or girl, who bears no relation to a man and woman, becomes legally their child. From that, the conclusion is drawn that on the ground of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and by the Spirit’s work of regeneration, those who previously bore no intimate relation to God then become His children. Such an idea is not only crude, but utterly erroneous. John 11:52 makes it quite clear that Christ died for His people under the consideration of their *being* the children of God, and not in order to make them so—as both the Hebrews in Egypt (Exo 5) and the heathen in Corinth (Act 18:10) were owned by God as His *before* the one was redeemed and the other had the Gospel preached unto them. “And because ye *are sons* [and not to make them such], God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). The Spirit is given to quicken, communicate the nature of sons, and reveal to us our union with Christ.

The inestimable blessing of adoption was bestowed upon the elect by predestination, it being God’s design therein to make them His sons by a mere act of His sovereign will, “Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph 1:5). Thus, it is neither what Christ has done for them nor what the Spirit works in them which makes them the children of God. Adoption refers to that state of grace into which the elect are brought by virtue of their union with Christ. It is a *sonship-in-law*, in and through the Son, God appointing them unto union and communion with Him. Adoption conveys the legal right to every blessing we enjoy both here and hereafter. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:16-17). As holiness is that which fits us for heaven, so adoption or sonship conveys *the right* thereto. “Adoption does not so much design the blessing itself prepared in the divine predestination, or the grace received in effectual calling, as the inheritance to which the saints are adopted, even the heavenly glory; see Romans 8:23” (John Gill).

The elect were bestowed upon Christ before the foundation of the world in the relation of *children*, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:13) will be His own triumphant exclamation at the last day—not one of them lost. It is quite true that by

the fall they became alienated from God, and thus in need of His being reconciled to them and they to Him; that they became dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore required to be quickened into newness of life. But observe closely how Galatians 4:4-5 states it, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them [previously His] that were under the law, that we might *receive* the adoption of sons," and because we were such, the Spirit was given to us. The declaration of adoption was made first in predestination (Eph 1:5), afterwards in Christ, and then in the believer.

As the Puritan Stephen Charnock (1628-1680) so succinctly stated it, "Adoption gives us the *privilege* of sons, regeneration the *nature* of sons. Adoption *relates* unto God as a Father, regeneration *engraves* upon us the lineaments of a Father. That makes us *relatively* His sons by conferring a power or right (Joh 1:12); this makes us *formally* His sons by conveying a principle (1Pe 1:23). By that we are enstated in the divine affection; by this we are partakers of the same."

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mat 5:17). A momentous statement was that, and a right understanding thereof is essential, particularly of the exact meaning of its final word. Determined to deny at all costs the evangelical truth that Christ rendered to the Law a vicarious obedience on behalf of His people, Socinians insist that in this passage "fulfil" signifies to fill out or fill full. But such a definition is entirely arbitrary, and is refuted by the canon of interpretation we are now illustrating. As the scholarly George Smeaton (1814-1889) pointed out, "No example of such a usage can be adduced when the verb is applied to a law or to an express demand contained in the spirit of the law: in which case it uniformly means 'to fulfil.' Thus it is said, 'he that loveth another hath fulfilled [i.e. kept] the law' (Rom 13:8). The inflexible usage of language rules the sense in such a phrase, to the effect that Christ must be understood to say that He came not to fill out or to supplement the law by additional elements, but to fulfil it by being made under it.

"Second, 'fill out' is inadmissible as applied to the second term or object of the verb: Christ did not come to fill out or expound the prophets, but simply to fulfil their predictions. Whenever the word here used is applied to anything prophetic, it is always found in such a connection that it can only mean 'to fulfil,' and hence we must not deviate from its uniform signification. Third, the eighteenth verse must be regarded as giving a reason for the statement made in the seventeenth. But what sort of a reason would be given if we were to render the connected verses thus, 'I am come to fill out or supplement the law, for verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled'?"

Moreover, it is to be carefully noted that the term fulfil was here placed by Christ in direct antithesis to "destroy," which further determines its scope and meaning, for to destroy the law is not to empty it of its meaning, but to rescind or abrogate it. Thus to "fulfil" is to be taken in its plain and natural sense, as meaning to perform what the Law and the prophets required—to substantiate them, to make good what they demanded and announced. Law can only be fulfilled by a perfect obedience being rendered unto it.

What has just been before us leads us to point out that the only sure and satisfactory way of settling the old controversy between the Protestant and popish theologians as to

whether the word “justify” means to *make* just or to *pronounce* just is to ascertain *how* the term is used by the sacred writers, for an appeal unto Holy Writ does not leave the issue in the slightest doubt.

In the first place, when we are said to “glorify God,” we do not render Him glorious, but announce that He is so. When we are bidden to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts (1Pe 3:15), we do not make Him holy, but assert that He is so. Equally, when it is said, “That thou mightiest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest” (Psa 51:4), the force of it is that Thou mightiest be pronounced righteous in Thy judicial verdicts. In none of these instances is there the least ambiguity or uncertainty. In none is there any transformation wrought in the Object of the verb—to suggest so would be horrible blasphemy. When wisdom is said to be “justified of her children” (Mat 11:19), it obviously signifies that she is vindicated by them. Nor does the word have any different force when it is applied to the sinner’s acceptance with God.

In the second place, it is to be noted that in many passages justification is placed over against *condemnation*. The meaning of a term is often perceived by weighing the one that is placed in opposition to it—as “destroy” is over against “fulfil” in Matthew 5:17. “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked” (Deu 25:1). “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD” (Pro 17:15). “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mat 12:37).

Thus, the forensic sense of the term is definitely established, for in those and similar passages two judicial sentences are mentioned which are exactly the reverse of each other. As to condemn a man is *not to make him* unrighteous, but is simply the pronouncing of an adverse sentence against him. So to justify is to not to effect any moral improvement in his character, but is simply declaring him *to be righteous*. The word is still further explained by Romans 3:19-20, “That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become [be brought in] guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight,” where guilt and non-justification are synonymous.

But in all generations, Satan and his agents have labored to make men believe that when Scripture speaks of God’s justifying sinners, it signifies the making of men righteous by means of something which is infused into them, or else produced by them; thereby dishonouring Christ. The early chapters of Romans are devoted to an exposition of this all-important truth.

First, it is shown that “there is none righteous” (3:10), none who measures up to the Law’s requirements. *Second*, that God has provided a perfect righteousness in and by Christ, and that this is revealed in the Gospel (1:16-17; 3:21-22). *Third*, that this righteousness, or vicarious obedience, of Christ is *imputed* or reckoned to the account of those who believe (4:11, 24). *Fourth*, that since God has placed to the credit of the believing sinner the fulfilment of the Law by his Substitute, he is justified (5:1, 18). *Fifth*, therefore none can lay anything to his charge (8:33).

Thus may the believing sinner exultantly exclaim, “In the LORD have I righteousness and strength” (Isa 45:24), “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in

my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa 61:10. "I will go in the strength of the LORD God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only" (Psa 71:16).

Many suppose when they read of the "foreknowledge" of God (Act 2:23; 1Pe 1:2) that the expression simply means His cognizing beforehand. It imports very much more, expressing infallible certainty because based upon His eternal decree, God foreknows what will be because He has purposed what shall be. In its verbal form, the word is actually rendered "foreordained" rather than "foreknown" in 1 Peter 1:20.

Some Arminians, in their inveterate opposition to the truth, have insisted that the word "elect" means a choice or excellent person, rather than a selected one, appealing to Christ's being termed God's "elect" in Isaiah 42:1. But the Holy Spirit has anticipated and refuted that wretched shift by defining the term in Matthew 12:18 (where He cites Isaiah 42:1), "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen." Mark 13:20 settles the meaning of "elect" once for all, "the elect's sake, *whom he hath chosen.*"

In common speech "prince" signifies one who is inferior to the king, but not when Christ is called "the Prince of peace" and "the Prince of life," as is clear from His being "Prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5). Many have been puzzled over mustard being called "the greatest among herbs" (Mat 13:32), and love being greater than faith (1Co 13:13), when in fact faith is its root—but "greatest" does not mean largest in the former, or superior in the latter, but *the most useful*—the "best gifts" of 1 Corinthians 12:31, and "greater" in 1 Corinthians 14:5, signify more useful.

20. *Distinguish between things that differ*, for if we do not, the Bible will at once appear to contradict itself, and our minds will be in a state of hopeless confusion. If we carelessly generalize and confound things apart, not only shall we form a vague conception of them, but in many instances a thoroughly erroneous one. Most necessary is it that the expositor attend diligently to this rule. Only so will he be able to give the true explanation of many a verse. Not only is it important to discriminate between two diverse things, but often to draw distinctions between various aspects of the same subject.

Take, first, the word "care." In Luke 10:41, we find our Lord rebuking Martha because she was "careful and troubled about many things," and His servant wrote, "I would have you *without carefulness*" (1Co 7:32); while in Philippians 4:6, Christians are exhorted to "be careful for nothing." On the other hand, we are exhorted that there should be no division in the local church, "but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1Co 12:25), and the apostle commended penitent saints for the "carefulness" it wrought in them and expressed his own concern for their welfare by referring to "our care" for them (2Co 7:11-12). Thus, there is a "care" which is forbidden and a care that is required. The one is a godly and moderate solicitude, which moves unto watchfulness and the taking of pains in the performing of duty; the other is a distrustive and inordinate one that produces distraction and worry.

In like manner, we must distinguish sharply between two totally different kinds of *fear*—the one which is becoming, spiritual, and helpful; the other carnal, worthless, hurtful. Believers are bidden to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phi 2:12), that is, with a conscientious horror of displeasing the One who has been so gracious

to them. Conversely, “perfect love casteth out fear” (Joh 4:18), namely that slavish dread which causes torment, those terrifying thoughts which make us look forward to the day of judgment with dismay. “God is greatly to be feared” (Psa 89:7), that is, held in the highest esteem and reverence, the heart deeply impressed with His majesty, awed by His ineffable holiness.

When we read of those who “feared the LORD, and served their own gods” (2Ki 17:33), it means that, out of a dread of His vengeance, they went through the outward form of worshipping Him, but that the love of their wicked hearts was set upon their idols. Thus a filial fear inspires with a grateful desire to please and honour God, but a servile fear produces terror in the mind because of a guilty conscience, as was the case with Adam (Gen 3:9-10), and is so now with the demons (Jam 2:19). The one draws to God, the other drives from Him; the one genders to bondage and leads to despair; the other works humility and promotes the spirit of adoration.

In order to understand certain passages, it is absolutely needful to recognize that there is a *twofold* “will” of God spoken of in the Scriptures, by which we do not mean His decreative will and His permissive will, for in the final analysis that is a distinction without a difference, for God never permits anything which is contrary to His eternal purpose. No, we refer to the very real distinction which there is between His *secret* and His *revealed* will, or, as we much prefer to express it, between His predestinating and His perceptive will.

God’s secret will is His own counsels which He has divulged unto none. His revealed will is made known in His Word, and is the definer of our duty and the standard of our responsibility. The grand reason why I should follow a certain course or do a certain thing is because it is God’s will that I should do so—made known to me in the rule I am to walk by. But suppose I go contrary to His Word and disobey, have I not crossed His will? Assuredly. Then does that mean that I have thwarted His purpose? Certainly not, for that is always accomplished, notwithstanding the perversity of His creatures. God’s revealed will is never performed perfectly by any of us, but His secret or foreordinating will is never prevented by any—Psalm 135:6; Proverbs 21:30; Isaiah 46:10.

What has just been referred to above is admittedly a great deep, which no finite mind can fully fathom. Nevertheless, the distinction drawn *must* be made if we are not to be guilty of making the Scriptures contradict themselves. For example, such passages as the following evince the universality and invincibility of God’s will being accomplished. “But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth” (Job 23:13). “But our God [not so the Arminians] is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” (Psa 115:3). “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan 4:35). “For *who* hath resisted *his* will?” (Rom 9:19).

On the other hand, such passages as the following have reference to the revealed or *perceptive* will of God which may be withstood by the creature. “And that servant, which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will” (Luk 12:47). “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1Th 4:3). “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1Th 5:18).

God's secret will is His eternal and unchanging purpose concerning all things which He has made, and is brought about by means and through agencies which He has appointed to that end, and which can no more be hindered by men or devils than they can prevent the sun from shining. ❧