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SPIRITUAL FLUCTUATIONS.

“Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God” (Psa. 55:19). As there are some people who uniformly enjoy good health, so there is a class of religious professors who appear to maintain one steady level of experience. There is no rise and fall of their emotional thermometer, no ebbs and flows in the tide of their energy, no ups and downs in their history. Their faith (such as it is) does not flag, their “assurance” is never eclipsed by the dark clouds of unbelief, their zeal continues lively to the end. Are such people to be envied or pitied? Perhaps such a question seems senseless. Does not the timid and trembling believer, whose case varies as often and as radically as the weather, frequently wish that his experience approximated far more closely to that which we have just described?

Surely such a uniform level of experience is greatly to be coveted. What more desirable than unruffled peace, unbroken confidence, uninterrupted joy. Ah, but all is not gold that glitters, and much that passes in the churches for the coin of Canaan lacks a genuine ring to it. We must needs inquire, Is such a peace that of the graveyard or the peace of Heaven? Is such confidence a carnal one, or the fruit of the Spirit? Is it a delusive or a substantial joy? In order to ascertain this, the question has to be raised, Is the fear of God upon such characters? Do they furnish any clear evidence that it is so? The solemn declaration of our text demands an impartial answer to these queries.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences *in his conflicts with sin*! At conversion it often seems as though the believer is completely delivered from all his spiritual enemies. His heart has been so melted and drawn out Godwards, his sense of Christ dying on the Cross in his room and stead has imparted such a hatred and horror of evil, that he is filled with a desire and determination to live henceforth unto the pleasing of his Lord. He feels that the Song of Israel on the farther shores of the Red Sea (Exo. 15) is exactly suited to express his case. But how soon he discovers that the Wilderness of Sin lies between him and the Promised Land, and that though the Egyptians be dead there are Amalekites to assail him (Exo. 17:8). True, God grants him many a token of His favour along the way, and at each gracious reviving indwelling sin appears to slumber; but soon after it awakens and rages worse than ever, and, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14) becomes his cry.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences *in his enjoyment of the Scriptures*! Often he is able to feelingly exclaim, “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psa. 19:10). But alas, it is by no means always so. When fellowship with God is broken our relish is lost for His Word, and it becomes more or less neglected. Sad to relate it was thus with Israel of old: “But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes” (Num. 11:6). And, when the Lord chastens His child because of his waywardness, so far from His Word affording comfort, it pricks, condemns, and terrifies. How many a backslider has turned to the Word only to feel that the solemn curses pronounced upon the hypocrite and the apostate apply to his case.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences *in his faith*! On some occasions his heart goes out instinctively to God so that he can exclaim, “I will trust and not be afraid” (Isa. 12:2); but at other times he is filled with doubts and fears, and is quite unable to lay

hold of the Divine promises. Nor is this always explainable from the human side: when a Christian is walking closely with God and is conscious of no transgression, yet he is not lord of his faith, and is painfully reminded of the fact. What “changes” the faith of Abraham experienced: not fearing to leave Chaldea at the call of Jehovah, yet in the time of famine going down to Egypt—daring to arm his servants and rescue Lot from Chedor-laomer—yet on two occasions afraid to own Sarah as his wife; believing God that he should have a numerous seed, and then resorting to the unbelieving device of cohabiting with Hagar.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences in *his prayer life*! One day he is favoured with real freedom and his devotions are delightful, but another day he is bound in the spirit and his attempts at supplication are wearisome. O how different it is when the believer is favoured with conscious access to God and an answer of peace is granted him, from feeling that the Lord is far off and the heavens above are as brass. How different it is from having liberty in pleading the promises than deeming ourselves to have no right to appropriate them; from having importunity to plead our suit than a sense that it is useless to continue asking. And what a sore trial it is for the Christian when such an experience is protracted: then it is that he cries, “Oh that I were as in months past” (Job 29:2).

What “changes” the true Christian often experiences in *his outward lot*! For a time—perhaps for years—the smile of Providence is upon him, and then all is drastically altered. One trouble follows swiftly upon the heels of another, until the sorely tried soul is ready to say with Jacob, “all these things are against me” (Gen. 42:36). The strain of financial reverses and family bereavements undermines his health, and Satan takes full advantage of his low spirits and shattered nerves. Thoroughly dejected, he asks, “where are Thy former loving kindnesses?” (Psa. 89:49).

But such “changes” or afflictions are helpful, for they deeply exercise an honest heart, humble him before the Lord, cause him to tread more softly, and deepen his fear of God. Long continued ease and comfort produce the worst effects upon the godless, but the spiritual fluctuations to which we have alluded are a part of God’s discipline for the believer’s growth in piety. —A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

8. *Christ and the Law: Matthew 5:17-20*

We are not unmindful of the fact that the passage now before us is one which will possess little attraction for the great majority of professing Christians in our degenerate age, and possibly some of our own readers would be better pleased if we superficially summarized its teaching rather than endeavour to give a detailed exposition of its weighty contents. Those verses which contain God's *promises* are far more acceptable in this day of self-pleasing and self-gratification, than those which insist upon our obedience to the Divine *precepts*. But this ought not to be, for the one is as truly a part of God's Word as the other, and just as much needed by us. If any vindication for our present procedure be required, it is sufficient to point out that the words we are to examine are those of Christ Himself, and He ever sought the glory of God and the good of souls, caring not for either the praise or the criticism of His hearers.

Healthy Christianity can only be maintained where the balance is properly preserved between a faithful exposition of the holy Law of God and a pressing of its claims upon the conscience, and by tenderly preaching the Gospel and applying its balm to stricken hearts. Where the former predominates to the virtual exclusion of the latter, self-righteous Pharisaism is fostered; and where the proclamation of the Gospel ousts the requirements of the Law, Antinomian licentiousness is engendered. During the past hundred years Christendom has probably heard fifty Gospel sermons or addresses to one on the Law, and the consequence has indeed been disastrous and deplorable: a light religion with no backbone and with loose and careless walking. Therefore when a servant of God is expounding, consecutively, any portion of the Scriptures, and in the course thereof arrives at a passage upon the Law, it is now (more than ever before) his bounden duty to tarry there and press its claims upon his hearers or readers.

Such a verse as the one which is to be particularly before us ought indeed to search all our hearts, especially those of us who have been called by the Lord to His service. Taken at its surface meaning Matthew 5:19 emphasizes the deep importance of obedience to the Divine commandments, and most solemnly warns against disobedience. Yet it is at this very point that modern Christendom errs most grievously, and the pulpit is chiefly to be blamed for this sad state of affairs. Not only do many who pose as ministers of Christ themselves break the commandments, but they publicly teach their hearers to do the same; and this not with regard to the "least" of the Divine precepts, but in connection with the most fundamental of God's laws. Should these lines catch the eyes of any such men, we trust that it may please the Lord to use the same in convicting them of the enormity of their sin.

Our Lord was on the point of correcting various corruptions of the Law which obtained among the Jews of His day, and He prefaced what He had to say by cautioning them not to misconstrue His design, as though He were opposing either Moses or the Prophets, neither of whose writings were at any variance with the kingdom He had come to establish. So far from setting Himself against Moses, He, with the most solemn assertion, declared the Law to be of perpetual obligation (v. 18), and such was His regard for it that if anyone posing as a minister in His kingdom should break the least of the Law's precepts and taught others to make light of it, he should be as little in the eyes of the Lord as the precept was in his eyes (v. 19); while those practicing and inculcating the Law, should have His highest approval.

Our passage begins at 5:17, in which our Lord made known in no uncertain terms *His* attitude toward the Divine Law. False conceptions had been formed as to the real design of His mission, and those who were unfriendly toward Him sought to make the people believe that the Lord Jesus was a revolutionary, whose object was to overthrow the very foundations of Judaism. Therefore in His first formal public address Christ promptly gave the lie to these wicked aspersions and declared His complete accord with the Divine revelation given at Sinai. Not only was there no antagonism between Himself and Moses, but He had come down to earth with the express purpose of accomplishing all that had been demanded in the name of God. So far was it from being His design to repudiate the Holy Law, He had become incarnate in order to work out that very righteousness it required, to make good what the Levitical institutions had foreshadowed, and to bring to pass the Messianic predictions of Israel's seers.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). Well did Beza say upon this verse, "Christ came not to bring any new way of righteousness and salvation into the world, but to fulfil that in deed which was shadowed by the figures of the Law: by delivering men through grace from the curse of the Law; and moreover to teach the true use of obedience which the Law appointed, and to engrave in our hearts the force of obedience." On the dominant word "fulfil," Matthew Henry pertinently pointed out, "The Gospel is 'The time of reformation' (Heb. 9:10)—not the repeal of the Law, but the amendment of it (i.e., from its Pharisaical corruptions—A.W.P.) and consequently, *its re-establishment*."

"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" (v. 18). In these words our Lord affirmed the perpetuity of the Law, insisting that it should never be abrogated. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God endures forever: the Old Testament as much as the New, the Law as truly as the Gospel. The "verily I say unto you" was the solemn assertion of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness. Everything in the Law must be fulfilled: not only its prefigurations and prophecies, but its precepts and penalty—fulfilled first, personally and vicariously, by and upon the Surety. Fulfilled second and evangelically, in and by His people; and fulfilled third, in the doom of the wicked, who shall experience its awful curse forever and ever. Instead of Christ's being opposed to the Law of God, He came here to magnify it and render it honourable (Isa. 42:21); and rather than His teachings being subversive thereof, they confirmed and enforced it.

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 5:19). This afforded proof of what Christ had declared in verses 17 and 18, for the language He here employed manifestly implies the perpetual and inflexible obligation of the Law throughout the entire course of the kingdom of Heaven—this Christian era. Not only so, but the words of Christ in this verse make unmistakably clear the inestimable value which He placed upon the Divine commandments, and which esteem He would strictly require and exact from all who taught in His name: His disapproval falling on the one who slighted the least of the Law's requirements, and His approval resting on each who by his example and teaching honoured the same.

"Whosoever *therefore* shall break one of these least commandments," namely, the "jot and tittle" of the previous verse—the smallest part of the Law. Weigh carefully the word

we have placed in italics: it denotes two things. First, Christ is here illustrating or exemplifying what He had so expressly affirmed in the previous verses and insists that instead of encouraging His followers to disregard the Divine Law, He upheld its claims in the most certain manner, for the King Himself would frown upon any of His officers who dared to disesteem its smallest requirements. Second, Christ drew an obvious conclusion from what He had laid down in the foregoing. If the Master Himself came not to destroy the Law but rather to fulfil it, then it manifestly followed that His servants, too, must keep the commandments and teach others to do the same. It is in this way the ministers of Christ are to be identified: by their following the example which He has left them.

Let us next take notice of how what immediately follows the “therefore” clinches the interpretation we gave of the “destroy” and the disputed but simple “fulfil” of verse 17. To “destroy” the Prophets would be to deny their validity, to repudiate their inspiration, to annul their authority, so that they would then possess no binding power on the people of God. In like manner, to “destroy” the Law is not simply to break it by transgression, but also to abolish it: it is such a destruction as would rob it of all virtue and power so that it would be no law at all. This is why the Lord added, “break one of these least commandments and *teach* men so.” The order is significantly the same in both verses: “destroy . . . fulfil” (v. 17), “break . . . do and teach them” (v. 19).

Let us further observe how the contents of this verse establish the definition we gave of “the Law” in the preceding verses—a matter on which there has been some difference of opinion among the commentators. We pointed out that, while it is clear from the later parts of the Sermon, Christ alluded principally to the moral law, yet in view of the circumstances under which this Discourse was delivered, and in view of Christ’s allusion to the “jot and tittle” of the Law, the ceremonial and judicial aspects of it must not be excluded. Throughout this passage “the Law” is to be understood in its widest latitude, as embracing the entire Mosaic Law. This is clear from our Lord’s reference to “one of these *least* commandments,” for surely we cannot think of the Ten Commandments in such a connection; for they one and all belong to the fundamental statutes of the kingdom.

Should anyone demur at what has just been said and insist that “the Law” is to be understood as here referring to the Ten Commandments only, we shall not quarrel with him. It may indeed be pointed out inasmuch as the Divine Decalogue is a unit, and therefore each of its commands possess equal authority, that no part of it can be of slight obligation; yet some parts of it respect matters of, relatively, more importance than do others. Transgressions of the first table are far more heinous than those against the second: to take the Lord’s name in vain is much more sinful than stealing from a fellow creature. So, too, there are degrees of criminality in offenses against the precepts of the second table: to murder is a graver crime than to bear false witness against my neighbour. Thus, while none of the Ten Words are trivial, some respect more momentous objects than the others. Nevertheless, let not the solemn fact be forgotten that “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10).

Ere passing on it should be pointed out that the verse now before us also definitely confirms our explanation of the “ye” in verses 13-16—a point which is disputed by many of our moderns. When treating of that passage we called attention to our Lord’s change of the pronoun in His second division of the Sermon. In verses 3 to 10 the Saviour throughout used “theirs” and “they,” but in verses 11 to 16 He employed “ye” and “you.”

We insisted that this second section has exclusive reference to Christ's official servants—the New Testament successors of the “Prophets” (v. 12), for they are, ministerially, the salt of the earth and the light of the world. That Christ continued to have in mind the same class, and was addressing Himself not to the rank and file of His people, but to His official servants, is clear from His, “Whosoever shall do and *teach* them.”

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven.” The “kingdom of Heaven” here, as in the great majority of places, has reference to the sphere of profession. It is wider than the Church which is Christ's body, for none but the elect of God are members of *that*. The “kingdom of Heaven” takes in all who claim to own the sceptre of Christ, and therefore it includes the false as well as the real, as is clear from our Lord's parables: the tares growing in the same field as the wheat, the bad fish being enclosed in the net with the good: though at the end there shall be a severance of one from the other. This at once removes any difficulty which may be felt over a minister who teaches others to break God's commands having any place at all therein. This kingdom was announced by Christ's forerunner (3:2) and since that time has been preached (11:12).

Two different explanations have been given by the commentators as to the meaning of “he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven.” First, that one is called the least because he is not deemed worthy to have any part at all or any real inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God: this is negated by the Lord's own words. Second, and strange to say, the one adopted by the best writers: this person shall be held in such low esteem by his fellow-citizens as to be called by *them* the least in the kingdom. But we see nothing in our verse which indicates that the reference is to the judgment of men. Personally, we believe something far more solemn than *that* is in view: the evil minister shall be judged the least by the King Himself. Does not our verse look back to, “The ancient and the honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is *the tail*” (Isa. 9:15). It was Christ's condemnation of the unfaithful servant.

Not only does our present verse solemnly condemn Dispensationalists (who repudiate one of the greatest of all God's commands: the Sabbath statute), but it announces the disapproval of Christ upon another class of errorists. Not a few Calvinists have pitted the Gospel against the Law, and instead of showing the one is the handmaid of the other, have represented them as being irreconcilable enemies. These men have disgraced Divine grace, for they fail to show that grace works through righteousness, and have taken from the Christian his Rule of Life. Their conception of what Christian liberty consists of is altogether wrong, denying that the believer is under Divine bonds to walk in obedience to the Decalogue. Failing to see that Romans 6:14 has reference to our justification and not our sanctification, they repudiate the moral law, teaching that in no sense are we under its authority. But though such men be held in high esteem by many of the churches, they are the very “least” in the sight of Christ, and must yet answer to Him for engaging in the very practice which He here denounces.

Antinomianism (the repudiation of the moral Law as the Christian's Rule of Life) is as reprehensible and dangerous as Papal indulgences. If on the one hand we need to guard against legality (seeking to keep the Law in order to merit something good at the hands of God), on the other hand there is just as real a danger of dwelling so exclusively on the grace of the Gospel that we lose sight of the holy living required. “Let us then beware equally of Antinomian licentiousness and of Pharisaical self-righteousness: these are

Scylla and Charybdis, the fatal rock and whirlpool: most men in shunning the one fall into the other, and we need the Holy Spirit to pilot us between them. But the clear and full exposition of the holy Law of God and the Scriptural application of it to the heart and conscience, forms one most important preservative from these fatal extremes” (Thomas Scott).

“But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 5:19). Note well the order here: “do and teach.” As Paul exhorted his son in the faith, “take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:16)—Christ requires integrity of life and soundness of doctrine from His servants. The Lord is both mocked and grievously insulted by ministers who practice one thing and preach another: far better to quit preaching entirely if our lives be opposed to our sermons. Furthermore, there will be no power in the preaching of the man whose own walk clashes with his talk: his words will carry no conviction to the hearts of his hearers—as one quaintly but solemnly said to his minister, “I cannot hear what you say, from seeing what you do.” Finally, a minister cannot with any clearness of conscience and joy of heart teach others their duty, unless he practices what he preaches. —A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

87. *His Mighty Men.*

2 Samuel 23 supplies a vivid illustration of the great variety of spiritual gifts and graces which God bestows upon His people in general and on His ministers in particular. All are not called to engage in the same specific form of service, and therefore all are not alike qualified. We see this principle exemplified in the natural sphere. Some have a special aptitude for certain avocations, while others are fitted for entirely different ones: those who find it easy to work a typewriter or keep books, would be quite out of their element if they attempted to do the work of a farmer or carpenter. So it is in the spiritual realm: one is called to some particular sphere and is endowed accordingly, while another is appointed to a different function and is suitably equipped for it; and naught but confusion would follow if the latter attempted to discharge the duties of the former.

“Every man hath his proper gift of God: one after this manner, and another after that” (1 Cor. 7:7), but whether our talents be more or fewer, it is our duty to use and improve the same for the good of our generation. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will” (1 Cor. 12:11), and therefore we must be content with the gifts and position which God has allotted us, neither despising those below nor envying those above us. There are various degrees of usefulness and eminence among Christians, just as there were different grades of honour among those worthies of David. Of one of them we read, “Therefore he was their captain, howbeit he attained not unto the first three” (2 Sam. 23:19), and later in the chapter we are given a list of another thirty who occupied a yet lower rank. First in eminence were the Apostles; next to them were the Reformers: and below them are those who have followed during the last four centuries.

Throughout the long and checkered career of David there were two things to cheer and comfort him: the unchanging faithfulness of God and the loving devotedness of his servants. Another has pointed out that at the close of Paul’s career he had the same spring of solace to draw from. “In his second Epistle to Timothy he glances at the condition of things around him: he sees the ‘great house,’ which assuredly was not so with God as He required it; he sees all that were in Asia turned away from him; he sees Hymeneus and Philetus teaching false doctrine, and overthrowing the faith of some; he sees Alexander the coppersmith doing much mischief; he sees many with itching ears, heaping to themselves teachers, and turning away from the truth to fables; he sees the perilous times setting in with fearful rapidity; in a word, he sees the whole fabric, humanly speaking, going to pieces; but he, like David, resting in the assurance that ‘the foundation of God standeth sure.’ And he was also cheered by the individual devotedness of some mighty man or other, who, by the grace of God, was standing faithful amid the wreck. He remembered the faith of a Timothy, the love of an Onesiphorus; and moreover, he was cheered by the fact there would be a company of faithful men in the darkest times who would call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

In last month’s article we called attention to the logical connection of 2 Samuel 23 with the previous chapter, where “the last words of David” (his final inspired and official message) are recorded. We may also notice that our present passage comes immediately after David’s reference to the “Everlasting Covenant” which Jehovah had made with him (v. 5). How significant is this, and what blessed instruction it conveys to us. The two things are intimately, yea, inseparably connected: the eternal counsels of God’s grace and

His providing us with all needed assistance while we are in a time state. In other words, that “Everlasting Covenant” which God made with His elect in the person of their Head guarantees the supply of their every need in this world, the interposition of the Lord on their behalf wherever required, and the raising up of faithful friends to help in each hour of emergency. Thus David found it, as the verses before us amply demonstrate.

If the Spirit of God has been pleased to chronicle some of the bravest exploits of David himself, He has not been altogether silent upon the heroic achievements of those who stood loyally by him when he was menaced by his numerous foes. This too adumbrated something yet more blessed in connection with the antitypical David and His officers. Some of their deeds of devotion may not be known among men, or at most little valued by them, but they are recognized and recorded by God, and will yet be publicly proclaimed from His throne. We should have known nothing of these deeds of David’s worthies had not the Spirit here described them. So, many a heart which now throbs with affection for Christ of which the world is not cognizant, and many a hand which is stretched forth in service to Him which is unnoticed by the churches, will not pass unheeded in the Day to come.

Also in last month’s article we dwelt upon the exploits of the first triumvirate of David’s mighty men—Adino, Eleazer and Shammah (vv. 8-12)—our present passage opens with a most touching incident with records (we believe) another heroic enterprise in which the same three men acted together. We are told, “And three of the thirty chiefs went down and came to David in the harvest time into the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim” (v. 13). This most probably takes us back to what is narrated in 1 Samuel 22, when the uncrowned son of Jesse was a fugitive from the murderous designs of King Saul. It was not, then, in the hour of his popularity and power that these three officers betook themselves unto David, but in the time of his humiliation and weakness, while taking refuge in a cave, that they espoused his cause. No fair weather friends were these, but disinterested and unselfish supporters.

“And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem” (2 Sam. 23:14). How strangely varied is the lot of those who are beloved of God! what ups and downs in their experience and circumstances! Bethlehem was the place where David was born—presaging the incarnation of his Son and Lord—but now it was occupied by the enemies of God and His people! How many a dwelling-place which once gave shelter to an eminent servant of God is now the abode of worldlings. From the fertility and peacefulness of Bethlehem, David was forced to flee and seek refuge in a cave: then let us not be cast down if a lowly and uncongenial habitation be our portion. But David was not forgotten by the Lord, and He graciously moved the hearts of others to seek him out and proffer their loving service. Take heart, then, lonesome believer: if God does not raise up earthly friends for you, He will doubly endear Himself to your heart.

“And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” (v. 15). Some of the Puritans believed that David was not here expressing his desire for literal water, but rather for the Messiah Himself, who was to be born at Bethlehem. Though this does not appear to be borne out by what follows, yet it is surely significant that such excellent and desirable water was to be found there. Bethlehem means “the house of bread,” and as the Lord Jesus declared, He is in His own blessed Person both the Bread of Life and the Water of Life—the Sustainer and Refresher of the new man. Personally, we agree with Matthew Henry that what

is recorded in this verse “seems to have been an instance of his weakness,” when he was dissatisfied with what Divine providence had supplied, giving way to inordinate affection and yielding to the desires of mere nature.

It was summer time, when the weather was hot and trying, and David was thirsty. Perhaps good water was scarce at Adullam, and therefore David earnestly cried, “Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem.” True, it is natural to hanker after those things which Providence withholds, and such hankering is often yielded to even by godly men in an unguarded hour, which leads to various snares and evils. “David strangely indulged a humour which he could give no reason for. It is folly to entertain such fancies, and greater folly to insist upon the gratification of them. We ought to check our affections when they go out inordinately toward those things which are more pleasant and grateful than others” (Matthew Henry). The best way, and perhaps the only one, of doing this is by heeding that injunction—“giving thanks always for all things unto God” (Eph. 5:20), thereby evidencing we are content with such things as we have—instead of lusting after those we have not.

“And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David” (2 Sam. 23:16). What proof this gave of how highly these brave men valued their leader, and how ready they were to face the greatest of dangers in his service. It must be remembered that at this time David was uncrowned, a fugitive from Saul, and in no position to reward their valiant efforts on his behalf. Moreover, no command had been issued, no one in particular was commissioned to obtain the water from Bethlehem: it was enough for them that their beloved master desired it. How little they feared the Philistines: so absorbed were they in seeking to please David, that terror of the enemy had no place in their hearts! Do they not put all of us to shame? How feeble in comparison is our devotedness to the antitypical David! How trifling the obstacles which confront us from the peril which menaced them.

“Nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD” (v. 16). Very blessed is this, and a lovely sequel to what has just been before us. Those three men had spontaneously responded to the known wish of their leader, and, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, they had—whether by use of the sword or by strategy we are not told, but most likely the former—obtained and brought back to David the longed-for refreshment. Such devotion to his person and such daring on their part was not lost upon David, and being recovered from his carnal lapse and seeing things now with spiritual discernment, he deemed that water a sacrifice too costly for any but Jehovah Himself, and hence he would not suffer the sweet odour of it to be intercepted in its ascent to the throne of God.

“And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men” (v. 17). This is ever one of the marks of a gracious man. When he is conscious of making a mistake or of committing folly, he does not feign ignorance or innocence, but acknowledges and seeks to correct the same. The outstanding characteristic of regeneration is that where this miracle of grace is wrought, an *honest heart* is ever the evidence of the same. It is those who are under the full sway of Satan who are crafty, deceitful, and serpentine in their ways. Those whom Christ saves, He conforms unto His image, and *He* was without guile. David was now ashamed of his in-

ordinate desire and rash wish, and regretted exposing his brave officers to such peril on his behalf. This is another mark of the genuine child of God: he is not wholly wrapped up in himself.

Sin and self are synonymous terms, for as someone has quaintly pointed out the center of SIN is "I," that is why when the Church confesses, "all we like sheep have gone astray," she defines it by saying, "we have turned everyone to *his own way*." If sin and selfishness are synonymous, grace and unselfishness are inseparable, for when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart there is awakened a genuine concern for the good of our fellows, and therefore will the Christian seek to refrain from what would injure them. "Upon reflection and experience, a wise man will be ashamed of his folly, and will abstain not only from unlawful indulgences, but from those also which are inexpedient and might expose his brethren to temptation and danger" (Thomas Scott).

"And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three" (v. 18). We are not here informed when or where this extraordinary feat was accomplished, but from the analogy supplied by the other examples in this chapter, we know it was performed by Divine enablement, for the public good, and in the service of David. It is solemn to note that Abishai's more famous, and yet infamous brother, has no place in this role of honour, illustrating the solemn truth that "the memory of the just is blessed," yet "the name of the wicked shall rot." "Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three" (v. 19). These degrees of eminence and esteem exemplify the fact that men are not designed to all occupy a common level: the theory of "socialism" receives no countenance from Scripture.

"And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lion-like men of Moab" (v. 20). It is good to see the sons walking in the steps of their sires when a noble example has been set before them: God takes notice of the one as much as the other. Those men of Moab might be fierce and powerful, but nothing daunted Benaiah, who went forth and slew them. This, too, is recorded for our encouragement: no matter how strong and furious be our lusts, in the strength of the Lord we must attack and mortify them. "He went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow" (v. 20). Amid the frosts of winter our zeal is not to be relaxed. Nor must the soldiers of Christ expect to always have plain sailing: even when engaged in the best cause of all, formidable obstacles will be encountered, and the soldiers of Christ must learn to endure hardness and conduct themselves like men.

"And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and slew him with his own spear" (v. 21). If his slaying of the lion is a figure of the servant of Christ successfully resisting the Devil (1 Peter 5:8), his vanquishing of this Egyptian (spoken of in 1 Chron. 11:23 as a "man of great stature") may well be regarded as a type of the minister of God overcoming the world, for in Scripture "Egypt" is ever a symbol of that system which is hostile to God and His people. And how is victory over the world obtained? We need go no farther than this verse to learn the secret: by maintaining *our pilgrim character*, for the "staff" is the emblem of the pilgrim. If the heart be fixed upon that fair Land to which we are journeying, then the shows of this "vanity fair" will possess no attraction for it. The world is overcome by "faith" (1 John 5:4): a faith which grasps the good of God's promises enables us to reject the evils of this world.

“These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard” (vv. 22, 23). Once again we are reminded that there is a gradation among the creatures and servants of God: there is no such thing as equality even among the angels. How wrong it is, then, for any of us to be dissatisfied with the status and position which the sovereign will of God has assigned to us: let us rather seek grace from Him to faithfully discharge our duties, however exalted or lowly be our station in life. Our chapter ends with a list of thirty men who were in the third grade: the first being Asahel (v. 24) and the last Uriah (v. 39), the former being murdered by Joab and the latter being sent to his death by David—deliverance from one danger is no guarantee that we shall escape from another. —A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

8. *Its Manifestation.*

Next month, (D.V.), we shall bring to a close our remarks upon this important and blessed aspect of our subject. What we are here treating of is God's making known in time that purpose of grace which He formed concerning the Church in eternity past. The everlasting love of God unto His chosen people is discovered in a variety of ways and means, chief among them being the inestimable gifts of His Son for them and of His Spirit to them. Thus, we have so far dwelt upon, first, the incarnation and mission of Christ as the principal opening of the Father's heart unto His own, for while the glorification of the Godhead was His chief design therein, yet inseparably connected therewith was the blessing of His saints. Second, God's gracious design is manifested by the communication of the Spirit unto the elect, whereby they are made the subjects of a supernatural call. Third, this is made still further evident by the supernatural change wrought in them by the Spirit's regeneration and sanctification.

Fourth, by *Divine preservation*. "But 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" (1 Peter 5:10). This verse sets forth the wondrous and mighty grace of God dispensed to His elect in effectually calling them, in preserving them from temptation and sin, in strengthening and enabling them to persevere unto the end, and—withstanding all the opposition of the flesh, the world and the devil—bring them at last securely unto eternal Glory; for as Romans 8:30 declares, "Whom He called them He also glorified." Once again we shall draw freely from the most excellent writings of the Puritan, Thomas Goodwin, first, because his works are now out of print and unknown to our generation, and second, because having personally received so much help therefrom, we wish to share the same with our readers.

It is to be duly noted that in the immediate context (1 Peter 5:8) the Devil is set forth in all his terribleness as our "Adversary" for malice, likened unto "a lion" for strength, unto a "roaring lion" for dread, "walking about, seeking" such is his unwearied diligence; "whom he may devour" if God prevent not. Now observe the blessed and consolatory contrast: "But God," the Almighty, the self-sufficient and all-sufficient One; "the God of grace": how comforting is the singling out of *this* attribute when we have to do with Satan at the point of temptation. If the God of grace be for us, who can be against us? When Paul was under temptation, a messenger (or angel), from Satan being sent to buffet him, what was it that God immediately set before him for relief? This: "My *grace* is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12:9)—the grace in God's heart toward him and the grace working in his own heart, both to assist him effectually.

But there is something yet more precious here in 1 Peter 5:10: "the God of *all* grace," which has reference first to the exceeding riches of grace that are in His nature, then to the benevolent designs which He has toward His own, and then to His gracious dealings with them. The grace in His nature is the fountain, the grace of His purpose or counsels is the wellhead, and the grace in His dispensations or dealings with us are the streams. God is an all-gracious God in Himself, even as He is the Almighty, which is an essential attribute. There is a limitless ocean of grace in Himself to feed all streams in which His purposes and designs of grace are to issue forth. Our consolation from hence is that all the grace which is in the nature of God is in the promise of His being "the God of all

grace” to His Church, declared to be so engaged as to afford supplies unto them, yea, to the utmost expenditure of these riches as their needs shall require.

Nor is God known to be such only by His people in the New Testament era. David, who was the greatest subject as well as adorer of this grace that we find in the Old Testament, apprehended and acknowledged the same. “According to Thine own heart hast Thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things” (1 Chron. 17:19). And mark what immediately follows, “O LORD, there is none like Thee, neither is there any God besides Thee”: that is, Thou art the God of all grace, for it was a point of *grace*, high grace, David is there extolling, namely, God’s Covenant of Grace with him in Christ, just revealed to him. “What can David say more?” (v.18): such Divine favour is beyond him; just as Paul in Romans 8—“what shall we speak to these things?” When God pardons, He does so after the manner of a great God, full of all grace: He will “*abundantly* pardon” (Isa. 55:7), not according to our thoughts says He (vv. 8, 9) but according to His own.

That to which the old divines referred when they spoke of God’s purposing grace was this ocean thereof in His own nature, from which flow those beneficent designs which He has toward His people, designs which the Prophet described as “thoughts of peace” (Jer. 29:11), which He took up unto them or which He “thinks toward” them. It would be impossible to speak of all these thoughts, for as David declares, “Many, O LORD my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order” (Psa. 40:5). We must then summarize them and dwell only on those particulars which directly serve to the point before us, namely, our preservation, or God’s carrying us safely through all temptations unto everlasting Glory.

1 Peter 5:10 manifestly speaks of God’s purposing grace, that grace which was in His heart toward His people before He called them, from which, in fact, that call proceeds and which moved Him thereunto, as it is expressly affirmed in 2 Timothy 1:1, 4. The first act of His purposing grace was in His choosing of us, His singling out of those persons whom He designed to be a God of grace unto. Choice of their persons is therefore styled “the election of grace” (Rom. 11:3), that being the fundamental act of grace, upon which all others are built. To be a God of grace unto His Church is to love its members merely because He chose to love them, for grace is the *freeness* of love. “Receive us graciously,” is the prayer of the Church (Hosea 14:2); “I will love them freely” (v. 4), is the Lord’s response. Divine grace and human merits are as far apart as the poles: as Romans 11:6 shows, the one mutually excludes the other.

For God to be the God of all grace unto His people is for Him to resolve to love them, and that *forever*; to be unchanging in His love and never to have His heart taken from off them. This is clearly denoted in the language of 1 Peter 5:10, for He, “called us unto His eternal glory.” It is not simply that He has called us into His grace or favour, but into glory, and that, “*eternal* glory”: that is, by the effectual call He estates us into the whole and full *right* thereof forever. What can this mean but that God called us out of such grace and love as He did and does resolve to be the God of all grace to us for everlasting, and therefore calls us without recall (Rom. 11:29). This is clearly borne out by what immediately follows: “after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect: stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10).

This grace thus fixed in the Divine will is the most sovereign and predominating principle in the heart of God. Overruling all other things, He wills, so as to effectually carry

on and carry out His resolution of free grace. Grace, as it is the most resolute, so it is the most absolute principle in the heart of God; for unto it belongs the dominion. What else means “the *throne* of grace” (Heb. 4:16)? Why else is grace said to “reign unto eternal life” (Rom. 5:21)? The same thing appears in the context of 1 Peter 5:10: “Humble yourselves (or submit) to the mighty hand of God”—that is, to His sovereign power—“that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6): He “careth for you” (v. 7) ; all of which is carried down to “the God of all grace” in verse 10; which is followed by, “To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (v. 11), that is, to Him as “the God of all grace.”

But it is as the God of all grace by way of execution or *performance* that we must now contemplate Him, in His gracious dispensations of all sorts, which are *the effects* of the ocean of grace in His nature and the purpose of grace in His heart. We may turn back for a moment to 1 Peter 5:5: “God giveth grace to the humble,” which refers to His actual bestowment of grace. In like manner, James declares, “He giveth more grace” (4:6), where he quotes the same passage as Peter’s. In James it is spoken of in reference to subduing His people’s lusts, particularly lusting after envy. Truly this is grace indeed, that when lust is raging, the grace in God should move Him to give more grace whereby He subdues—unto them that humble themselves for their lusts, He gives more grace.

It will help us to a better understanding of this Divine title, “the God of all grace,” if we compare it with, “the God of all comfort,” in 2 Corinthians 1:3. Now that is spoken of in relation to *effects of* comfort: as the Psalmist says, “He is good, and doeth good”; so immediately after He is spoken of as “the God of all comfort” it follows, “who comforteth us in all our tribulations.” He is “the God of all comfort” in relation unto all sorts of distresses, which the saints at any time have—in like manner, He is the God of all grace in respect of its gracious effects. Yet this may be added—for the due magnifying of free grace—that the two are not commensurate, for the dispensations of His grace are *wider* than the dispensations of His comfort. God often gives grace where He does not bestow comfort, so that He is the God of all grace to a larger extent than He is of all comfort.

Now since there is a fullness, an ocean, *all* dispensatory grace to be given forth by God, what necessarily follows? This, first, that there is no temptation that does or can befall a saint that is under the dominion of free grace, but God has a grace prepared to be applied when His hour arrives. It clearly implies that God has a grace fitted and suited as every need and occasion should arise. There is no sore in the heart but He has a plaster ready for it, to be laid thereon in due season. The very word “grace” is a relative to need and temptation, and so “*all* grace” must be a relative to *all* or any needs whatsoever. If there were any want in the large subjects of free grace of which they are capable, and God had not a special grace for it, He were not the God of *all* grace. But it can never be said that the misery of His people is more extensive than the scope of God’s grace.

As God has grace for all the manifold needs of His people, so He is the God of all grace in giving forth help as their occasions require, for such is the season for grace to be displayed. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in *time of need*” (Heb. 4:16). So again, “that He may maintain the cause of His servant, and the cause of His people Israel at all times, *as the matter shall require*” (1 Kings 8:59), which is to be viewed as a type of the intercession of the antitypical Solomon, the Prince of peace. Thus God’s favour is manifested unto His people at all times of need and in all manner of ways. If God were to fail His people in any

season and help them not in any need, then He were not the God of all grace, for it is the chief manifestation of being gracious to relieve in time of greatest need.

The fact that He is the God of all grace in respect of dispensing the same, demonstrates that He takes not this title upon Himself potentially, but that He is so *actually*—it is not merely that He has in Himself sufficient grace to meet all the varied needs of His people, but also that He really *does so*. By instances of all sorts, God gives full proof of the same. In the Day to come, He will have the honour of being not only the God of all grace potentially, but really so in the performance of it, for it will then be seen that He fully made good that word, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). The greatest and acutest need of the Christian springs out of his *indwelling* sin, yet ample provision is made here, too, for, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20).

This superabounding of Divine grace is gloriously displayed when God effectually calls His people. Let us mention one of two eminent details in proof. First, God then shows Himself to be the God of all grace in the *pardon* He bestows. Consider what an incalculable debt of sinning we had incurred! From earliest infancy the carnal mind is enmity against God: “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psa. 58:3). Every thought from the first dawning of reason has been only evil continually. Our sins were more in number than the hairs of our head. Suppose, Christian reader, you had lived for twenty or thirty years before God effectually called you: during all that time you had done no good—not a single act acceptable to the thrice holy God; instead, all your ways were abominable to Him. Nor had you any concern about God’s being so grievously dishonoured, nor of the fearfulness of your estate. And then, lo!—wonder of wonders—by one act, in a single moment, God blotted out all your sins: “having forgiven you *all* trespasses” (Col. 2:13).

Second, God showed Himself to be the God of all grace in bestowing on you a *righteousness* which met every requirement of His holy Law: a perfect righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ, which contained in it all obedience. That infinitely meritorious righteousness was imputed to your account wholly and at once: not piecemeal, a bit at a time, but in one entire gift. “For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:19). Verily, that was indeed “*abundance of grace*.” That perfect righteousness of Christ is fully commensurate with all the designs of grace in God’s heart toward you, and the whole of this you received at your calling, so that you may exclaim, “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, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10). It was the realization of this which moved Paul to extol the grace bestowed on him at his first conversion: “And the grace of our Lord was *exceeding abundant*” (1 Tim. 1:14).

Third, God showed Himself to be the God of all grace in *sanctifying* you. What that consists of we showed at length some time ago in our series of articles on that subject. Briefly, it includes first and foremost the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, who takes up His residence in the heart, so that your body is the temple of God, whereby you are set

apart and consecrated to Him. In consequence of this, mortifying grace was bestowed, so that every lust then received its death-wound: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Quickening grace was also imparted, whereby the spirit is enabled to resist the flesh: "According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Justification and sanctification are inseparably conjoined: as the former provides an inalienable standing for us, so the latter secures our state; and thereby is the foundation laid for our glorification.

These inestimable blessings were the pledges and earnest of your preservation, for "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). It is in no wise a question of your worthiness, but solely a matter of Divine grace: "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Eccl. 3:14). True, sin is still left within you—to further humble your heart—and your lusts are ever active; nevertheless, you may be fully assured with David, "The Lord *will perfect* that which concerneth me; Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth forever" (Psa. 138:8). True, you have a most inadequate appreciation of such wondrous favour being shown you, and to your unutterable shame you must confess that your daily conduct is utterly unworthy thereof—nevertheless, that, too, serves to bring out the amazing grace which bears with so ungrateful and vile a creature.—A.W.P.

THE HOLY SABBATH.

3. *Its History.*

In our examination of the original institution of the Holy Sabbath we pondered the three acts of the Creator as recorded in Genesis 2:3, each of which had distinct and special reference to man. First, God “*rested* on the seventh day,” thereby giving an example for us to follow. But this was not left to be vaguely inferred, for second, “God *blessed* the seventh day,” setting on it a special dowry for all who should give due heed to its proper end and object. “What men may lose for the moment in productive employment, shall be amply compensated by the refreshment it will bring to his frame—by the enlargement and elevation of his soul—above all, by the spiritual fellowship and interest in God which becomes the abiding portion of those who follow Him in their ways, and perpetually return to Him as the supreme rest of their souls” (P. Fairbairn). Third, God “*sanctified* it,” setting it sacredly apart from the other six days, thus conferring on it a distinctive character.

But in their efforts to evade the obvious force of Genesis 2:3 some have raised the objection that Genesis 2 records no express *command* for man to keep the Sabbath. Really, such a cavil is undeserving of notice, yet as a few readers are disturbed by it, we will briefly answer the objection. First, it is plainly required of us in and by the law of nature that some part of our time (Divinely given to us) should be set apart and devoted to God, for the solemn observance of His worship in the world. And where but in Genesis 2:3 could primitive man learn *which part* of that time was to be thus employed? That natural dictate is met by the Sabbath law requiring us to sanctify one day in seven. Second, this pretense of any obscurity that is in the command of Genesis 2:3 is easily removed by another instance of like antiquity. It has been universally acknowledged that a promise of Christ was given in Genesis 3:15 for the faith of the ancients, yet that very verse was addressed to the Serpent in the form of a curse! With equal propriety, then, could we deny any *promise* in Genesis 3:15 and declare there is no *command* in Genesis 2:3—each is self-evidently implied.

Third, a yet more decisive consideration is found in our Lord’s words, “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). This cannot mean less than that the Sabbath was made for man’s observance and for his benefit. God’s glory and our good are always inseparably connected: whatever He has appointed us to heed and do in order for His honour, it is equally our wisdom and gain to comply with. If, then, the Sabbath was made for man’s observance, it is self-evident that he is under Divine authority to submit thereto. Ere passing from this verse, let it also be pointed out that since the Sabbath was necessary and profitable for man in his first estate, when free from sin—remember that man was not exempt from labour in Eden, as the words “to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15) prove!—then how much more so now in order to recover him from his corrupt condition!

In the remainder of this article we shall devote our attention to the primitive observance of the Holy Sabbath, confining ourselves to its history in the earliest ages, namely, to the recognition thereof before its formal renewal in Exodus 20. It is frequently asserted that the Sabbath law originated at the time when Jehovah wrote the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone. But as we have shown, that is an error. The Sabbath was instituted before man fell. We would now inquire what evidence is there of men’s *keeping* the Sabbath prior to Israel’s reaching Sinai. Before answering this question, let it be pointed out that if there were none at all this would by no means convince us that the Sabbath was

unknown before Exodus 20. An argument drawn from *silence* is always inconclusive. No mention is made of circumcision from the time of Joshua until the Babylonian captivity, yet how fallacious would be the inference that the rite had ceased to be practiced! Even though the Sabbath occupies so prominent a place in the institutions of Moses, yet it is never mentioned again till the days of Elijah (nearly seven hundred years later), and then only an incidental allusion is made to it (2 Kings 4:23).

There would be no need to wonder, then, in such particularly brief compendiums of history as are given of antediluvian and Patriarchal times, if there should be a similar silence to those mentioned above. But is there a complete silence? Is there nothing in Scripture to indicate whether or not men kept the Sabbath before Israel reached Sinai? In seeking an answer we have to turn back to the book of Genesis and the first 18 chapters of Exodus, and ere we consult them it is well to remember their general character. No less than 25 centuries of human history are covered by those first 68 chapters of the Bible. Thus it is evident at once that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to give us little more than a bare outline of what transpired during the infancy of our race. Hence, we must not expect to find here anything more than a few references to the Sabbath, and these of the briefest nature. The same pertains to almost any other theme. There *are* unmistakable references to the Sabbath, but they are only *incidental* in character.

“And in the process of time (*at the end of days*) it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD; and Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock” (Gen. 4:3, 4). The very fact of Cain and Abel coming together, and this for the purpose of presenting an offering to the Lord, intimates that the time when they were thus engaged was a *stated* one, known to and recognized by them both—otherwise, what had induced the jealous Cain to unite with the pious Abel in this action? The bringing of offerings by Cain and Abel was the formal recognition of God: it was an act of devotion. Moreover, it is expressly stated that they worshipped God “at the end of days,” the Divinely appointed season. And *when* was that? Exactly what is signified by “the end of days”? Surely the unprejudiced reader who comes to the Scriptures in childlike simplicity, desiring to learn the mind of God, will form only one concept here. He will naturally say, Why, the end of days must be the end *of the week*, and that, of course, is the Sabbath.

But can we prove what has just been advanced? Yes, by an appeal to the context. If the first three chapters of Genesis be read through, it will be found they mention one “end” and one only, and that is in Genesis 2:3: “On the seventh day God *ended His work* which He had made.” Now as Scripture ever interprets Scripture, as its terms are defined by the way in which they are used in other passages, and as the law of the context is whatever fixes the meaning of any given clause, so here in Genesis 4:3, the “end of days” can only mean the end of the working week—the Sabbath. Thus this passage teaches us four things. First, that previous to the days of Cain and Abel a Sabbath had been instituted. Second, that this Sabbath came at the end of a week of work. Third, that it was recognized and owned by the sons of Adam and Eve. Fourth, that it was set apart for sacred use, namely, the worship of God.

We next turn to, “and he called his son Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our *work* and *toil* of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed” (Gen. 5:29). Here we are told why Lamech named his son “Noah.” The very fact that the Holy Spirit has recorded this detail must be because some important truth is illus-

trated thereby. Names were not given in those early days at the idle caprice of the parents. They were pregnant with meaning, frequently given under Divine guidance, often memorializing some event of importance. Plainly was this the case in our present instance. Lamech belonged to the godly line, being the son of Methuselah (whose name was certainly given under Divine impulse), the grandson of Enoch. Lamech called his son Noah, which means *rest*, giving as his reason, "this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands." In the light of Genesis 2:3, 4, is not this profoundly suggestive? Did not Lamech, in the name given his son, express his gratitude to the great Creator for providing a weekly Sabbath as a rest from "work" and "toil"? It was a pious heart looking forward to *the Rest* of which the weekly Sabbath was both the type and pledge.

"And it came to pass on *the seventh day* that the waters of the flood were upon the earth" (Gen. 7:10, margin). This verse records the beginning of the great Deluge and its terms are the more noteworthy because in the next verse we read, "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, in the *seventeenth day* of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up and the windows of Heaven were opened." Surely the Spirit had some good reason for giving us *both* of these time-marks. The second of them is obviously the *historical* reference: why, then, are we first told that the Flood began "on the seventh day"? Clearly because the reference here is a *moral* one, a word of explanation. It makes known to us one of the reasons, perhaps the chief one, why God visited the earth with such sore judgment. It conveys a solemn message to us: the flood began on the Sabbath Day! Is not the inference inescapable? Was it not an act of, what men term, poetic justice? Doubtless the antediluvians had flouted the Sabbath institution as they had every other Law of God. They had desecrated His Holy Day: therefore, when the Lord visited His wrath upon them it was on the Sabbath that the Flood commenced!

"And he stayed yet other *seven days* . . . and he stayed yet other *seven days*" (Gen. 8:10, 12). These references make it clear that way back in Noah's day the division of time into weeks was a recognized custom, for the repetition here makes it evident this was no casual or arbitrary act on his part. This fact has not received the attention it deserves. How was it, why was it, and when originated this division of time? We submit that this hebdomadal revolution of time furnishes another striking testimony to the primitive Sabbath. We quote now from the late B. H. Carroll, President of the S. W. Baptist Seminary:

"I ask you to notice this strange historical fact, that for all other divisions of time we have a reason in the motions of the heavenly bodies. The revolution of the earth around the sun marks the division of time into years. The moon's revolution around the earth gives us the month. The day comes from the revolution of the earth upon its axis. But from what suggestion of nature do you get the division of time into *weeks*? It is a positive and arbitrary division. It is based on authority. The chronicles of the ages record its recognition. But how did it originate? Here in the oldest book, in the first account of man, you will find its origin and purpose. Noah twice recognized it in the ark, when he waited seven days each time to send out his dove. Jacob in the days of his courtship found it prevalent when he looked for satisfaction in the laughing eyes of Rachel, and the stern father said, "fulfil her week" (Gen. 29:27). Why a week? How did he get it? It was God's division of time.

Yes, it was *God's* division of time. Why should our week have seven rather than six or ten days? and why have men everywhere adopted this measure? A primeval Sabbath explains it: it is the key to an otherwise insoluble enigma. Since there is no prominent natural phenomenon visible to every eye which can account for it, we are obliged to deduce some ancient institution coeval with our race, from which it spontaneously originated. That institution was the Sabbath, in which the Creator set apart one seventh of man's days for the worship of Himself. Thus did the Architect of the universe write His signature across time itself, and never shall it be erased.

In his masterly dissertations on the Sabbath, John Owen showed that no impartial and pious mind can entertain any doubt that there was a free observance of the Sacred Day by the Patriarchs: we give a very brief digest of his argument. The creation of the world was one of their principal articles of faith, as the Apostle asserts in Hebrews 11:3—then how vain to imagine they had utterly lost the tradition of the rest of God upon the finishing of His works. That the Patriarchs did observe the solemn worship of God in and with their families is clear from Genesis 18:19 and other passages, and for *that* some stated time was indispensably necessary; and what ground have we to suppose they were left without Divine direction in this important matter? The testimony which is given to them, that they walked with God and obtained a good report, the fact that they are said to have kept “the way of the Lord” and “His charge” (Gen. 26:5), all point to the same conclusion.

“And Abraham set *seven* ewe lambs of the flock by themselves” (Gen. 21:28). In this connection it is striking to note how that the ancients, universally, regarded the number seven as having a mystical significance. Seven times did Jacob bow before Esau in proof of his submission to him; seven years did he serve Laban for Rachel, and seven more for Leah. The number seven had, for some reason or other, obtained special favour in the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The same obtained also among other branches of the race of Shem. The history of Job, for example, who lived in the early times of the postdiluvian age, relates that when his friends came to comfort him they, “sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights” (2:13)—and when (later) the Lord bade him offer sacrifice on their behalf, He said, “take unto you now *seven* bullocks and *seven* rams, and go to My servant Job,” etc., (42:8). Balaam evidenced the same mystical reverence for this number (Num. 23:1). This writer is firmly convinced that the sacredness which from earliest times attached to the mystical “seven” has its roots in the primeval Sabbath.

There is yet another trace of the Sabbath in the early ages of the world to be found in Exodus: a most striking one it is, though it seems to have quite escaped the notice of those who have written on this subject. One reason for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was that they might be free to keep the Sabbath and to offer those sacrifices and observe those ordinances which were connected with it. “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may *hold a feast unto Me* in the wilderness” (5:1), “Let My people go, that they may *serve Me*” (9:1). Do not these words clearly imply that while sojourning in Egypt the Israelites had been prevented from observing their religious ordinances? Their merciless taskmasters had blotted out their Sabbath and made their life one ceaseless round of toil and misery. This is clearly confirmed by the words of Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron: “And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let (hinder) the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them (not

“cease” but) REST from their burdens” (Exo. 5:4, 5). Evidently one of the first things the intrepid Moses did when he returned to Egypt was to insist that his brethren keep the Sabbath, and hence Pharaoh’s objection.—A.W.P.

GOD'S GRACE AND PETER.

"But 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" (1 Peter 5:10). Though we have drawn so freely in our current articles on the manifestation of election, from the most excellent exposition of this verse given by Thomas Goodwin, we feel that it will be glorifying to God and helpful to our readers if we here insert verbatim the striking introduction which that Puritan gave to his comments on this passage. First, because it contains a very beautiful linking up of one passage with another, serving to show how wondrously Scripture itself interprets Scripture. Second, because the case of Peter himself serves to supply such a blessed illustration and demonstration of what is here declared: if notwithstanding his sad lapse, the God of all grace preserved him unto eternal glory, this is a sure pledge that He will do so with all believers.—A.W.P.

Our Apostle Peter had himself greatly suffered for a while. Satan sought to winnow and to devour him, but the God of all grace did, by Christ, and His fore-warning of him, and through His prayer for him, graciously restore, strengthen, settle, stablish him, as the story of the Evangelists and the Acts record. So all this was exemplified first in himself; and he, who himself hath been instructed in temptations and sufferings, is the ablest fore-warner and instructor of others. You know our Saviour did thereupon take occasion to command him, that, "when he should be converted or restored, he should strengthen his brethren" (Luke 22:32). And this our holy Apostle, you see, is carefully mindful of, and that to the utmost; and hath left it behind him for all his brethren to the end of the world, the greatest consolatory against Satan and all temptations that hath in so few words fallen from any Apostle's pen.

And when I more seriously compare things together, I am strongly inclined to think and believe that Peter, in uttering these words of exhortation and comfort in verses 8-10, had those very passages of Christ to himself in his eye and view; and be yourselves the judges: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Observe the parallel.

1. "Satan hath desired"; that is, obtained leave of God, by *seeking* "thee (Peter) to winnow thee" and shake forth all grace out of thee. Thus Christ to Peter. Correspondingly Peter here to us: "Satan, your adversary, goeth about *seeking* whom (of you) he may (have leave to) devour." And as Christ gave Peter fore-warning there, so Peter here his brethren.

2. Christ prayed that his "faith fail not." That was the matter of Christ's prayer for him on that occasion. Faith's not failing is Satan's foiling. Answerably the subject matter of our Apostle also in his exhortation here is, "whom resist steadfast in the faith," as that which is the most effectual remedy and shield of resistance of all others (Eph. 6:16). It is not "in the faith" as understanding the *doctrine of faith* only, as some would seem to restrain it, because of the article (in the Greek), but in the *grace of faith*, as Calvin more genuinely stated. And the grace of faith is so eminent in itself, and hath so great an hand, and bears so great a stress in this business of temptation, that it deserves here the honour of this article.

3. "Strengthen thy brethren." There are but two words, yet both are here in *terminus*. "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren in the world" (1 Peter 5:9), there is the one, and then, "after ye have suffered, God will strengthen you" (v. 10) there is the other. So publisheth he the comfort and concernment thereof to all his

brethren in the world: and contents not himself to utter it barely in the very same word of strengthening, but further surroundeth that, for the more abundant consolation, for the multiplication of words to the same intent: He shall “restore you” (see Gal. 6:1); that is, when you are fallen—“set you in joint again,” which was Peter’s very case: “stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

4. Lastly, which is not to be neglected, Christ, in strengthening Peter’s faith against Satan, sets a, “*but* I have prayed,” as in direct opposition unto all that Satan could do; and Peter, when he had set forth Satan as our professed adversary in the greatest dreadfulness, he then in like manner of opposition, brings in his intended consolatory with a “*but* God, the God of all grace by Jesus Christ,” etc., set in full array and counter against him on our behalf, as our Undertaker, Guardian, and the strength of our hearts forever” (Thomas Goodwin).

N.B. It is indeed striking and most blessed to observe the particular instruments God employed as His penmen in the communicating of His Word, and how specially fitted and suited they were for their several tasks. Who, but Solomon was so well qualified, experimentally, to write the book of Ecclesiastes: the man who had such exceptional opportunity to drink from all the poor cisterns of this world, and then to record the fact that no satisfaction was to be found in any of them. Who was so eminently adapted to write upon the beautiful theme of Divine love (as he does throughout the Epistles) as the one who had been so peculiarly favoured as to lean upon the bosom of God’s Beloved! So here: who could so feelingly write upon “the God of all grace” as poor Peter! If Saul of Tarsus is the supreme example in New Testament times (for Manasseh is as remarkable a case in the Old Testament) of the wondrous *saving* grace of God, surely Simon is the most outstanding trophy, in New Testament times (for David parallels him in the Old) of God’s *preserving* grace. And, my reader, it is the same today. When God calls any man into His service, He qualifies him for the particular work He has for him to do. Alas, how many run without being sent of Him.—A.W.P.

OUR ADVOCATE.

“If anyone sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). He is the only Practicer in the Court of Heaven, and therefore He is full of the businesses of His Church. It is His office to dispatch the affairs of those that come under Him, and crave His favour and intercession to debate their causes; and He is both faithful and merciful in His place, and furnished with such unmeasurable unction of the Spirit and vast abilities to transact all the businesses of His Church, that whosoever comes unto Him for His counsel and intercession, “He will in nowise cast out,” or refuse their cause. And this is one great assurance that we may take comfort in: that be our matters never so foul and inexcusable in themselves, yet the very entertaining of Him of our counsel, (engaging of Him as our Counsel) and the leaning upon His wisdom, power, fidelity, and mercy to expedite our businesses, to compassionate our estate, and rescue us from our own demerits, does as it were, alter the property of the cause, and produce a clean contrary issue to that which the evidence of the thing in trial would of itself have created.

And as we may observe that men of extraordinary abilities in the law delight to wrestle with some difficult business, and to show their learning in clearing matters of greatest intricacy and perplexity, so does Christ esteem Himself most honoured, and the virtue and wisdom of His Cross magnified, when in cases of sorest extremity, of most hideous guilt, of the most black and uncomfortable darkness of soul, which pose (puzzle) not only the presumptuous, but the hope, faith, thoughts, contrivances which the hearts of men can even in wishes make to themselves for mercy, they do yet trust Him whose thoughts are infinitely above their thoughts, and whose ways above their ways (Isa. 55:8). “Who is there 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).

When the soul can go unto Christ with such complaints and acknowledgments as these: Lord, when I examine my cause by my own conscience and judgment of it, I cannot but give it over as utterly desperate and beyond cure. My bones are dried, my hope is cut off, I am utterly lost—my sins and my sorrows are so heavy that they have broken my spirit all to pieces, and there is no sound part in me. But Lord, I believe Thou knowest a way to make dead bones live (Ezek. 37:3). I believe that Thy thoughts and ways are above mine, that Thou knowest Thine own thoughts of peace and mercy (Jer. 29:11), though I cannot comprehend them, that Thy riches are unsearchable, that Thy love is above human knowledge, that Thy peace passes all created understanding. I know that though I am the greatest of all sinners, and feel enough in myself to sink me as low as Judas into Hell, yet Thou hast not left me without patterns of all longsuffering (1 Tim. 1:16), of Thy royal power in enduring, and in forgiving sins.

And now Lord, though Thou afford me no light, though Thou beset me with terrors, though Thou make me to possess the sins of my youth, yet I still desire to fear Thy name, to walk in Thy ways, to wait upon Thy counsel. I know there is not in men or angels so much wisdom, compassion, or fidelity as in Thee, and therefore if I must perish I will perish at Thy feet, I will starve under Thy table, I will be turned away and rejected by Thee, who hast promised to cast away none that come unto Thee. I have tried all ways, and I here resolve to rest and to look no further. Thou that hast kept such a sinner as I am out of Hell thus long, can by the same power keep me out forever. Upon Thy wisdom and compassion (who can make dried bones to flourish like an herb, and broken bones to re-

joice and sing), I cast the whole weight of my guilty spirit—into Thy bosom I empty all the fears and requests of my distracted and sinking soul. I say when a man can thus pour out himself unto Christ, he esteems the value and power of His blood *most highly honoured*, when men believe in Him against reason and above hope, and beyond the experience or apprehensions they have of mercy; for Christ loves to show the greatness of His skill in the salvation of a Manasseh, a crucified thief, a persecutor, an injurious blasphemer, in giving life unto them that nailed Him to His Cross The more desperate the disease, the more honourable the cure.—(E. Reynolds, 1648).

It is indeed one of the most consolatory truths to be found in Divine revelation. Yea, to the editor it seems the crowning mercy of the Gospel, that the Judge of all the earth has graciously provided His erring people with an Advocate to plead their cause in the high court of Heaven: an Advocate who will not put in a single plea which is to the slightest degree opposed to the holy Law of God, who will not request the Judge to show leniency at the expense of righteousness, who will not make light of sin; yet One who is filled with compassion toward those who are out of the way, and One who will successfully silence him who is “the Accuser of the brethren.” Surely it is obvious that only One in all the universe is competent to serve in this capacity: that only One who is in Himself both Jehovah’s Fellow and also the Firstborn among many brethren is qualified for such an office.

What comfort should penitent saints draw from this grand aspect of the Mediatorial office! “Penitent” ones we say, for so long as we remain indifferent to our breaches of God’s Law and sins against His Gospel, we are not entitled to any spiritual comfort. This is a balm for *wounded* hearts, for those who are sick of sin. It is a cordial for the faint, for those who are cast down by their wretched failures. It supplies the self-judged believer with an unanswerable reply to his arch-enemy, who would feign have him believe that he has forfeited the Divine favour and sinned beyond the hope of forgiveness. Not only does Satan denounce us before God, but he also accuses us in the court of conscience: yet just as Christ silences him in the one, so may we (by faith’s appropriation of Christ’s Advocacy) silence him in the other.

How much we owe to Christ’s advocacy we shall never fully know down here. When Satan has beguiled us into wrong-doing, when our communion with God is broken and our hearts become cold, hard and prayerless, there is One on high who makes intercession for us. And is not the immediate effect of this that, in due course, we are made conscious of our wrongdoing, brought to confess our wickedness, beg the Father to forgive us, and then are granted a fresh token of His love? Surely these are nothing else than the fruits of Christ’s advocacy on our behalf. Then let us not fail to thank God not only for One who died for us, but who now lives to make intercession for us. —A.W.P.