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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

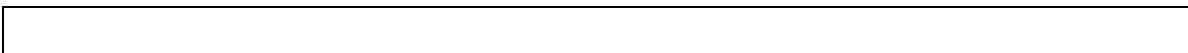
CONTENTS

The Holy Spirit.....	2
<i>17. The Spirit Quickening (Part 1)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	5
<i>77. The Faith of Rahab (11:31)</i>	
The Life of David.....	12
<i>29. His Lamentation for Saul</i>	
Dispensationalism	16
<i>9. The Word of God</i>	
The Providence of God	21
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Five)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	26
<i>3. Its Problem</i>	
A Prayer and Confession.....	30
A Prayer	33

Arthur W. Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886, and born again by God's Spirit in 1908. He studied briefly at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago before his pastoral work in Colorado, California, Kentucky, and South Carolina, USA, and in Sydney, Australia. In 1934, he returned to his native England, taking his final residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, in 1940, where he remained until his death in 1952.

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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THE HOLY SPIRIT

17. The Spirit Quickening (Part 1)

In this article, we shall confine ourselves to *the initial* operation of the Spirit within the elect of God. Different writers have employed the term “regeneration” with varying latitude—some restricting it unto a single act, others including the whole process by which one becomes a conscious child of God. This has hindered close accuracy of thought and has introduced considerable confusion through the confounding of things which, though intimately related, are quite distinct. Not only has confusion of thought resulted from a loose use of terms, but serious divisions among professing saints have issued therefrom. We believe that much if not all of this would have been avoided had theologians discriminated more sharply and clearly between the principle of grace (spiritual life) which the Spirit first imparts unto the soul and His consequent stirrings of that principle into exercise.

In earlier years, we did not ourselves perceive the distinction which is pointed by John 6:63 and 1 Peter 1:23—the former referring unto the initial act of the Spirit in “quickenings” the spiritually-dead soul, the latter having in view the consequent “birth” of the same. While it is freely allowed that *the origin* of the “new creature” is shrouded in impenetrable mystery, yet of this we may be certain, that *life precedes birth*. There is a strict analogy between the natural birth and the spiritual—necessarily so, for God is the Author of them both and He ordained that the former should adumbrate the latter. Birth is neither the cause nor the beginning of life itself, rather is it the *manifestation* of a life already existent. There had been a divine “quickenings” before the child could issue from the womb. In like manner, the Holy Spirit “quickens” the soul, or imparts spiritual life to it, *before* its possessor is “brought forth” (as James 1:18 is rightly rendered in the R.V.) and “born again” by the Word of God (1Pe 1:23).

James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23, and parallel passages *refer not* to the original communication of spiritual life to the soul, but rather to our being enabled to act from that life and induced to love and obey God by means of the Word of truth, which presupposes a principle of grace already planted in the heart. In His work of illumination, conviction, conversion, and sanctification, the Spirit uses the Word as the means thereto, but in His initial work of “quickenings,” He employs no means, operating immediately or directly upon the soul. First there is a “new creation” (2Co 5:17; Eph 2:10) and then the “new creature” is stirred into exercise. Faith and all other graces *are* wrought in us by the Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word, but *not so* with the principle of life and grace from which these graces proceed.

In His work of “quickenings,” by which we mean the impartation of spiritual life to the soul, the Spirit acts immediately from within and not by applying something from without. Quickening is a *direct* operation of the Spirit without the use of any instrument. The Word is used by Him afterwards to call into exercise the life then communicated. “Regeneration is a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human spirit. It is the action of Spirit upon spirit, of a divine Person upon a human person, whereby spiritual life is imparted. Nothing, therefore, of the nature of means or instruments can come between the Holy Spirit and the soul that is made alive. God did not employ an instrument or means when He infused physical life into the body of Adam. There were only two factors—the dust of the ground and the creative power of God which vivified that dust. The divine omnipotence and dead matter were brought into direct contact, with nothing interposing. The dust was not a means or instrument by which God originated life. So, too, in regeneration there are only two factors—the human soul destitute of spiritual life and the Holy Spirit who quickens it.

“The word and truth of God, the most important of all means of grace, is not a means of regeneration, *as distinct from* conviction, conversion, and sanctification. This is evident when we remember that it is the office of a means or instrument to excite or stimulate an *already existing* principle of life. Physical food is a means of physical growth, but it supposes physical vitality. If the body is dead, bread cannot be a means or instrument. Intellectual truth is a means of intellectual growth, but it supposes intellectual vitality. If the mind be idiotic, secular knowledge cannot be a means or instrument. Spiritual truth is a means of spiritual growth, in case there be spiritual vitality. But if the mind be dead to righteousness, spiritual truth cannot be a means or instrument.

“The unenlightened understanding is unable to apprehend and the unregenerate will is unable to believe. Vital force is lacking in these two principal factors. What is needed at this point is life and force itself. Consequently, the Author of spiritual life Himself must operate directly, without the use of means or instruments, and outright give spiritual life and power from the dead—that is, *ex nihilo*. The new life is not imparted because man perceives the truth, but he perceives the truth because the new life is imparted. A man is not regenerated because he has first believed in Christ, but he believes in Christ because he has been regenerated” (W.T. Shedd, Presbyterian, 1889).

Under the guise of honoring the written word, many have (no doubt unwittingly) dishonored the Holy Spirit. The idea which seems to prevail in “orthodox” circles today is that all which is needed for the salvation of souls is to give out the Word in its purity, God

being pledged to bless the same. How often we have heard it said, "The Word will do its own work." Many suppose that the Scriptures are quite sufficient of themselves to communicate light to those in darkness and life to those who are dead in sins. But the record which we have of Christ's life ought at once to correct such a view—who preached the Word as faithfully as He, yet how very few were saved during His three and a half years' ministry!

The parable of the sower exposes the fallacy of the theory now so widely prevailing. The "seed" sown is the Word. It was scattered upon various kinds of ground, yet notwithstanding the purity and vitality of the seed, where the soil was unfavorable, no increase issued therefrom. Until the ground was made good, the seed yielded no increase. That seed might be watered by copious showers and warmed by a genial sun, but while the soil was bad there could be no harvest. *The ground must be changed* before it can be fertile. Nor is it the seed which *changes the soil*. What farmer would ever think of saying, "The seed will change the soil"? Make no mistake upon this point—the Holy Spirit must first quicken the dead soul into newness of life *before* the Word obtains any entrance.

To say that life is communicated to the soul by the Spirit's application of the Word, and then to affirm that it is the principle of life which gives efficacy to the Word, is but to reason in a circle. The Word cannot profit any soul spiritually until it be "mixed with faith" (Heb 4:2), and faith cannot be put forth unless it proceeds from a principle of life and grace, and therefore that principle of life is not produced by it. "We might as well suppose that the presenting of a picture to a man who is blind can enable him to see, as we can suppose that the presenting of the Word in an objective way is the instrument whereby God produces the internal principle by which we are enabled to embrace it" (Thos. Ridgley, Presbyterian, 1730—quoted by us to show we are not here inculcating some *new* doctrine).

Yet notwithstanding what has been pointed out above, many are likely to still insist upon the quickening power which inheres in the Word itself, reminding us that *its* voice is that of the Almighty. This we freely and fully acknowledge, but do not all the unregenerate resist and refuse to heed that Voice? How, then, is that opposition to be *removed*? Take an illustration. Suppose the window of my room is darkened by an iron wall before it. The sun's beams beat upon it, but still the wall remains. Were it of ice, it would melt away, but the nature of iron is to harden and not soften under the influence of heat. How, then, is the sun to enter my room? Only by removing that wall—a direct power must be put forth for its destruction. In like manner, the deadly enmity of the sinner must be removed by the immediate operation of the Spirit, communicating life, before the Word enters and affects him.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Mat 6:22-23). By the "eye" is not here meant the mind only, but the disposition of the heart, cf. Mark 7:22. Here Christ tells us *in what* man's blindness consists, namely, *the evil disposition of his heart*, and that the only way to remove the darkness, and let in the light, is *to change the heart*. An "evil eye" is not cured or its darkness removed merely by casting light upon it any more than the rays of the sun communicate sight unto one whose

visive faculty is dead. The eye must be cured, made “single,” and then it is capable of receiving the light.

“It is said the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, *that* she attended unto the things that were spoken by Paul, see Act 16:14. It would be a contradiction, and very absurd, to say that God’s Word spoken by Paul was that by which her heart was opened, for she knew not what he did speak until her heart was opened to attend to his words and understand them. Her heart was first opened *in order to* his words having any effect or giving any light to her. And this must be done by an *immediate* operation of the Spirit of God on her heart. This was the regeneration now under consideration, by which her heart was renewed, and formed *unto* true discerning like the single eye” (Samuel Hopkins, 1792).

The soul, then, is quickened into newness of life by the direct and supernatural operation of the Spirit, without any medium or means whatever. It is not accomplished by the light of the Word, for it is His very imparting of life which fits the heart to receive the light. This initial work of the Spirit is absolutely indispensable *in order to* spiritual illumination. It is depravity or corruption of heart which holds the mind in darkness, and it is in *this* that un-regeneracy consists. It is just as absurd to speak of illumination being conveyed by the Word *in order to* a change of heart, or the giving of a relish for spiritual things, as it would be to speak of giving the capacity to a man to taste the sweetness of honey while he was devoid of a palate.

No, men are not “quickened” *by* the Word, they must be quickened in order to receive and understand the Word. “And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Jer 24:7). That statement would be quite meaningless if a saving knowledge of or experimental acquaintance with God were obtained through the Word *previous* to the “new heart” or spiritual life being given, and was the *means of* our being quickened. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Pro 1:7)—the “fear of the LORD” or divine grace communicated to the heart (spiritual life imparted) alone lays the foundation for spiritual knowledge and activities.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

77. The Faith of Rahab (11:31)

The inestimable value of spiritual faith is strikingly demonstrated in the case we are about to consider. The apostle had cited the faith of such illustrious characters as Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Moses. He had mentioned that of a believing company as they had passed through the Red Sea and had marched around Jericho. Now he gives an instance of one who had been a notorious sinner, as though to shame us if *our* faith falls short of hers who had formerly been an harlot. Having shown that the patriarchs, who were so highly venerated by the Jews, were honored by God solely on account of their faith and its fruits, we next behold how an alien woman, belonging to an accursed race, was, because of her faith, adopted into the Old Testament Church. “It hence follows that those who are

most exalted are of no account before God unless they have faith, and that, on the other hand, those who are hardly allowed a place among the profane and the reprobate are by faith introduced into the company of angels" (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

Rahab was a Canaanite, and therefore by nature "an alien from the commonwealth of Israel" and "a stranger from the covenants of promise." In her conversion and admission into the Old Testament Church, she was, in a peculiar manner, both a type and a pledge of the calling of *the Gentiles* and their reception into the Church of Christ in New Testament times. Thus did coming events cast their shadows before them. In such cases as Rahab and Ruth, God gave early intimations that His redemptive purpose was not confined to a single people, but that it would reach out unto individuals among all nations. Their incorporation among the Hebrews was a plain foreshadowment of the "wild olive tree" being grafted in and being made a partaker of "the root and fatness of the [good] olive tree" (Rom 11:17).

The salvation of Rahab was a signal instance of *the sovereignty* of God. "She was not only a Gentile, but an Amoritess, of that race and seed which in general was devoted unto utter destruction. She was therefore an instance of God's sovereignty in dispensing with His positive laws, as it seemed good unto Him. For of His own mere pleasure, He exempted her from the doom announced against all those of her original and tradition" (John Owen, 1616-1683). Being the supreme Potentate, God is not bound by any law or consideration other than His own imperial will and therefore does He have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens, see Rom 9:18.

Most blessedly do we also behold here the amazing *grace* of God. Not only did Rahab belong to a heathen race, but she was an abandoned profligate, a "harlot." In singling her out to be the recipient of His saving favors, God indeed made it evident that He is no respecter of persons. By her own choice, she was given up to the vilest of sins, but by the divine choice, she was predestinated to be delivered from that lust which is the most effective in detaining persons under its power, washing her whiter than snow by the precious blood of Christ, and giving her a place in His own family. It is in just such cases that the unmerited favour of God shines forth the more illustriously. There was nothing whatever in this poor fallen woman to commend her unto the favour of God, but where sin abounded grace did much more abound.

Not only may we behold in Rahab's case the exercise of divine sovereignty and the manifestation of divine grace, but we may also pause and admire the wondrous working of God's *power*. This is best perceived as we take into careful consideration the almost unparalleled element which enters into her case. Here the Holy Spirit wrought entirely apart from the ordinary means of grace. There were no Sabbaths observed in Jericho, there were no Scriptures available for reading, there were no prophets sounding forth messages from heaven. Nevertheless, Rahab was quickened into newness of life and brought into a saving knowledge of the true God. Let it be duly noted that this woman, who had previously wallowed in open sin, was regenerated and converted *before* the spies came to her house. Their visit simply afforded an opportunity for the avowal and public manifestation of her faith.

Let us also contemplate the marvelous workings of divine *providence* on this occasion. As the two spies, sent forth by Joshua to reconnoiter Jericho, drew near that heathen

stronghold, they had no idea that one of God's elect sojourned there, and had they been aware of the fact, they had no means of knowing how to locate her in a city of such size. Admire and adore, then, the secret hand of God which directed them to the very house in which His child abode. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," (2Ti 2:19) and in the cloudy and dark day He searches them out. The same God who sent Ananias to the street called "Straight," to deliver Saul from blindness, guided the two spies unto the house of Rahab to deliver her from death. In like manner, wherever there is one or more of His elect amid the darkness of heathendom, He sends His Word or His servants to enlighten and edify the same.

But it is with *the faith of Rahab* we must be chiefly engaged on this occasion. It will be observed that she is mentioned in Hebrews 11 *after* the destruction of Jericho, though "she received the spies in peace" before that city was destroyed. The reason for this is because her preservation—which was the fruit of her faith—was after the hosts of Israel had encompassed that city seven days. In seeking to ponder what is recorded in Scripture concerning the faith of Rahab, we propose to look separately at the ground, the effect, the nature, the confession, the breadth, the imperfection, and the reward of the same.

1. *The ground of her faith.* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). This does not mean that faith is *originated* by hearing the Word of God, any more than the shining of the sun imparts light unto the eye. No, faith is imparted by a sovereign act of the Spirit, and then it is instructed and nourished by the Word. In the prophetic song of Moses at the Red Sea, it was declared, "The people shall *hear, and be afraid*: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased" (Exo 15:14-16).

A striking fulfillment of the above prediction is found in the words of Rahab to the two spies, "I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Jos 2:9-11). This it is which explains the reference in Hebrews 11:31 unto the other inhabitants of Jericho, who perished because they "believed not." The knowledge which they had of God and His wondrous works, through the reports which had reached their ears, rendered them without excuse.

What has just been before us affords an example of a most solemn fact which is oft repeated—how souls are affected by the truth and how quickly the impressions made wear off. The inhabitants of Jericho were deeply stirred by the reports of God's judgments upon the wicked. They feared it was their turn next and their hearts melted within them. How, then, are we to explain the fact that they did not all of them immediately and earnestly cry

unto God for mercy? We believe the answer is found in Ecclesiastes 8:11, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." As the hosts of Israel encompassed Jericho each day and then returned quietly to their camp, space for repentance was granted its inhabitants, but when six days had passed, and the walls of the city remained as strong as ever, they felt quite secure, and hardened their hearts.

How, then, are we to account for the difference in Rahab? In this way—with them it was simply the stirrings of conscience and the workings of their natural fears, which soon subsided. But in her case, the power of the Holy Spirit had wrought within her—God had opened her heart, and consequently she "attended unto the things which were spoken" (Act 16:14). In other words, Rahab had been sovereignly quickened into newness of life, by which she was capacitated unto a saving knowledge of God Himself and the receiving His Word with meekness. Thus it was with the Thessalonian saints, whom the apostle reminded, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also *in power*, and in the Holy Ghost" (1Th 1:5). It is only in *such* cases that a radical and lasting effect is produced.

We must learn, then, to distinguish between three things—the divine gift of faith, the foundation provided for its support, and the assurance that issues for its resting upon that foundation. The gift of faith is imparted at regeneration, being one of the attributes of the new nature, "All men have not faith" (2Th 3:2), because all are not born again. The firm foundation which is provided for faith to rest upon is the sure Word of God—by it alone is faith supported, instructed, and fed. The assurance which issues from faith's resting upon this foundation is that confidence and certainty which fills the heart when God's Word is received implicitly into it. Thus it was with Rahab. Quickened by the Spirit, faith was planted within her soul, hence when the report reached her of God's wondrous works, she received it, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God," (1Th 2:13), and therefore did she say, "*I know* that the LORD hath given you the land" (Jos 2:9).

2. *The effect of her faith.* The faith of God's elect is a living, energetic principle, which "worketh by love" (Gal 5:6) and produces fruit to the glory of God. Herein it differs radically from that notional and inoperative faith of frothy professors, which goes no deeper than an intellectual assenting to certain doctrinal propositions, and ends in fair but empty words. That faith which is unaccompanied by an obedient walk and abounds not in good works is "dead, being alone" (Jam 2:17). Different far was the faith of Rahab. Of her we read, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (Jam 2:25). This does not mean that her good works were the meritorious ground of her acceptance with God, but that they were the evidence before men that a spiritual principle had been communicated to her, the fruits of which justified or vindicated her profession, demonstrating that she was a member of "the household of faith" (Gal 6:10)

In "receiving the spies with peace," she made it manifest that she had a heart for the people of God and was ready to do all in her power to help them. That clause of our text which we are now considering summarizes all that is recorded of her kindly conduct unto those two men in Joshua 2. She welcomed them into her home, engaged them in spiritual conversation, made provision for their safety, hid them from danger, and refused to betray

them. We believe there is a latent reference to her kindness (as well as to Abraham's) in Hebrews 13:1-3, for the word translated "messengers" in James 2:25 is the same as is rendered "angels" in Hebrews 13:2, "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." Alas, that so many professing Christians today, instead of heeding this exhortation, are almost ready to rend each other to pieces over every difference of opinion.

3. *The nature of her faith.* It was a *singular* faith. "The city of Jericho was about to be attacked. Within its walls there were hosts of people of all classes and characters, and they knew right well that if their city would be set upon and stormed, they would all be put to death. But yet strange to say, there was not one of them who repented of sin, or who even asked for mercy, except this woman who had been a harlot. She and she alone was delivered, a solitary one amongst a multitude. Now, have you ever felt that it is a very hard thing to have a singular faith? It is the easiest thing in the world to believe as everybody else believes, but the difficulty is to believe a thing alone, when no one else thinks as you think—to be the solitary champion of a righteous cause, when the enemy mustereth his thousands to the battle. Now this was the faith of Rahab. She had not one who felt as she did, who could enter into her feelings and realize the value of her faith. She stood alone. O it is a noble thing to be the lonely follower of despised truth.

"Rahab's faith was a *sanctifying* one. Did Rahab continue a harlot after she had faith? No, she did not. I do not believe she was a harlot at the time the men went to her house, though the name still stuck to her, as such ill names will, but I am sure she was not afterwards, for Salmon the prince of Judah married her...You cannot have faith and yet live in sin. To believe is to be holy. The two things go together. That faith is a dead faith, a corrupt faith, a rotten faith, which lives in sin that grace may abound. Rahab was a sanctified woman. O that God might sanctify some that are here" (C.H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

Hers was a *self-denying* faith. This is seen in her preferring the will of God before the safety of her country and sheltering these men who were strangers before the pleasing of her fellow-citizens. But it appeared most conspicuously in the venturing of her own life rather than to betray the messengers of Joshua, who were worshipers of the true God. Her action was fraught with the most dangerous consequences to her, but her fidelity to God made her scorn the threats of her citizens, the promiscuous events of war, and the burning of her city. Thus, by faith she, in effect, renounced all for God. When He calls us to do so, we must part with all that we hold near and dear in this world. Spiritual faith is best evidenced by acts of self-denying obedience (condensed from Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

4. *The confession of her faith.* This is recorded in Joshua 2:9-11, which shows it was made at the first opening she had. It was quite a comprehensive one—she owned the wondrous works of the Lord, was assured He had given Canaan unto His people, and acknowledged Him as the God of heaven and earth. Thereby she renounced all the idols of the heathen, glorified God with her lips, and illustrated the rule we have in Romans 10:10,

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Moreover, by placing the scarlet cord in her window, she, as it were, publicly displayed her colors and made it known under whose banner she had enlisted. How her conducts puts to shame those who after a long profession of the truth are ready to tremble at the first approach of danger and deem it prudence to keep at a safe distance from those who are exposed to persecution.

“It is the nature of true, real, saving faith, immediately, or at its first opportunity, to declare and protest itself in confession before men. Or confession is absolutely inseparable from faith. Where men, on some light and convictions, do suppose themselves to have faith, yet, through fear or shame, do not come up to the ways of expressing it in confession prescribed in the Scripture, their religion is in vain. And therefore our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, doth constantly lay the same weight on confession as on believing itself, Matthew 10:33; Luke 9:26. And the fearful, that is, those who fly from public confession in times of danger and persecution, shall be no less assuredly excluded from the heavenly Jerusalem, than unbelievers themselves, Revelation 21:8” (John Owen).

5. *The breadth of her faith.* Very blessed is it to note her further word to the spies, “Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token: And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death” (Jos 2:12-13). Some contracted hearts, in which the very milk of human kindness seems to have congealed, would deem Rahab’s request highly presumptuous. Personally, we believe that her soul was so overflowing with gratitude unto the Lord for His saving such an abandoned wretch, that her faith now perceived something of the infinitude of the divine mercy, and believed that such a God would be willing to show grace unto the whole of her family. Nor was she disappointed.

O that the breadth of Rahab’s faith may speak unto our hearts. O that the blessed Holy Spirit may fill us with compassion for our unsaved relatives and friends, and stir us up to wrestle with God in prayer on their behalf. It is right that we *should* desire God to show mercy unto those who are near and dear to us—not to do so would show we were lacking in natural affection. It only becomes wrong when we ignore God’s sovereignty and dictate instead of supplicate. It is blessed to observe that He who hath said, “According to your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29) and “all things are possible to him that believeth,” (Mar 9:23) *responded* to Rahab’s faith, and saved her entire household, though they, of course, only found deliverance by sheltering in the same house with her in which hung the scarlet cord—only under the Blood is there safety.

6. *The imperfection of her faith.* This appears in the reply which she returned to the king of Jericho (recorded in Jos 2:3-5) when he sent unto Rahab requesting her to deliver up the two spies. Fearful of their lives, she told lies, pretending she knew not whence the men had come, and affirming they were no longer in her house. Such a procedure on her part can by no means be justified, for her answer was contrary unto the known truth. The course she followed resembled the direction which Rebekah gave to her son Jacob. In the general, her intent was the fruit of great faith, for it had respect unto the promise of God (Gen 25:33), but in various details (Gen 27:6-7, etc.) it can in no wise be approved. The

Lord, in His tender mercy, is pleased to pass by many of the infirmities of His children, when He sees an upright heart and a desire to accomplish His promises. "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa 130:3). God bears with much weakness, especially in the lambs of His flock.

"I observe there was a mixture of infirmity in this act, an officious lie, which cannot be excused, though God in mercy pardoned it. This is not for our imitation, yet is for our instruction, and it shows us this, that faith in the beginning hath many weaknesses. Those that have faith do not altogether act out of faith, but there is somewhat of the flesh mingled with that of the spirit. But this is passed by out of God's indulgence. He accepteth us notwithstanding our sins before faith and notwithstanding our weaknesses in believing. Before faith she was a harlot, in believing she makes a lie. God doth reward the good of our actions and pardons the evil of them, not to encourage us in the sinning, but to raise our love to Him who forgives us so great a debt, receives us graciously, and pardons our manifold weaknesses" (Thomas Manton).

It is blessed to see that neither in our text nor in James 2:25 does the Holy Spirit make any reference unto Rahab's failure. Instead, in both places, He mentions that which was praiseworthy and to her credit. It is the very opposite with the malevolent world, which is ever ready to overlook the good and reflect only upon the evil of an action performed by a child of God. It is a gracious spirit which throws the mantle of charity over the deformities and defects in a brother or sister in Christ, as it is honouring to God to dwell upon that which His Holy Spirit has wrought in them. If we were quicker to judge ourselves for *our own* sad failures, we would not be so ready to blaze abroad the faults of our fellows. Let each of us seek grace to heed that exhortation, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*" (Phi 4:8).

7. *The reward of her faith.* "By faith the harlot Rahab *perished not* with them that believed not" (Heb 11:31). The historical account of this is to be found in Joshua 6:22-23, "But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel."

But not only was Rahab and the whole of her family preserved from the burning of Jericho which immediately followed, but as Joshua 6:25 tells us, she "dwelt in Israel." Thus, from being the slave of Satan, she was adopted into the family of God. From being a citizen of heathen Jericho, she was given a place in the congregation of the Lord. Nor was that all. Later, she became the honored wife of a prince in Judah, the mother of Boaz, and one of the grandmothers of David. Her name is inscribed upon the imperishable scroll of sacred history. It is recorded in Matthew 1 among the ancestresses of the Saviour—she was one of the mothers of Jesus! From what depths of sin and shame did sovereign grace deliver this poor woman—to what a height of honor and dignity did sovereign grace elevate her. Truly, the rewards of faith are most excellent and glorious.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

29. His Lamentation for Saul

The final chapter of 1 Samuel presents to us an unspeakably solemn and terrible scene, being concerned not with David, but with the termination of Saul's earthly life. In these articles, we have said very little about him, but here one or two paragraphs concerning his tragic career and its terrible close seem in place. A solemn summary of this, from the *divine* side, is found in Hosea 13:11, when at a later date, God reminded rebellious Israel, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, *and took him away in my wrath*," the reference being to Saul.

The history of Saul properly begins at the eighth chapter. There we behold the revolted heart of Israel, which had departed further and further from JEHOVAH, desiring a human king in His stead. Though Samuel the prophet faithfully remonstrated, and space was given them to repent of their rash decision, it was in vain. They were determined to have their own way. "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" (1Sa 8:19-20). Accordingly, God, "in His anger" delivered them up to their own hearts' lusts and suffered them to be plagued by the one who proved a disappointment and curse to them, until, by his godless incompetency, he brought the kingdom of Israel to the very verge of destruction.

From the *human* side of things, Saul was a man splendidly endowed, given a wonderful opportunity, and had a most promising prospect. Concerning his physique we are told, "And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people" (1Sa 9:2). Regarding his acceptability unto his subjects, we read that when Samuel set him before them, that "all the people shouted, and said, God save the king" (1Sa 10:24). More, "there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched" (1Sa 10:26), giving the young king favor in their eyes. Not only so, but "the Spirit of God came upon Saul" (1Sa 11:6) equipping him for his office and giving proof that God was ready to act if he would submit to His yoke.

Yet notwithstanding these high privileges, Saul, in his spiritual madness, played fast and loose with them, ruined his life, and by disobeying and defying God, lost his soul. In the thirteenth chapter of 1 Samuel, we find Saul tried and found wanting. The prophet left him for a little while, bidding him go to Gilgal and wait for him there, till he should come and offer the sacrifices. Accordingly we are told in verse 8, "He tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed." And then we read, "but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him"—having lost their confidence in the king to lead them against the Philistines to victory. Petulant at the delay, Saul presumptuously invaded the prophet's prerogative and said, "Bring hither a burnt offering to *me*, and peace offerings. And *he* offered the burnt offering" (1Sa 13:9). Thus did he forsake the Word of the Lord and break the first command he received from Him.

In the fifteenth chapter, we see him tested again by a command from the Lord, "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1Sa 15:2-3). But again he disobeyed, "But Saul and the people *spared* Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and *would not* utterly destroy them" (1Sa 15:9). Then it was that the prophet announced, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1Sa 15:22-23). From that point Saul rapidly went from bad to worse—turning against David and relentlessly seeking his life, shedding the blood of God's priests (1Sa 22:18-19), till at last he scrupled not to seek the aid of the devil himself (1Sa 28:7-8).

And now the day of recompense had come, when he who had advanced steadily from one degree of impiety to another should miserably perish by his own hand. The divine account of this is given in 1 Samuel 31. The Philistines had joined themselves against Israel in battle. First, Saul's own army was defeated (v. 1). Next, his sons, the hopes of his family, were slain before his eyes (v. 2), and then the king himself was sorely wounded by the archers (v. 3). Fearful indeed is what follows. No longer able to resist his enemies, nor yet flee from them, the God-abandoned Saul expressed no concern for his soul, but desired only that his life might be dispatched speedily, so that the Philistines might not gloat over him and torture his body.

First, he called upon his armour-bearer to put an end to his wretched life, but though his servant neither feared God nor death, he had too much respect for the person of his sovereign to lift up his hand against him (v. 4). Whereupon Saul became his own murderer, "Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it." And his armour-bearer, in a mad expression of fealty to his royal master, imitated his fearful example. Saul was, therefore, the occasion of his servant being guilty of fearful wickedness and "perished not alone in his iniquity" (Jos 22:20). As he had lived, so he died—proud and jealous, a terror to himself and all about him, having neither the fear of God nor hope in God. What a solemn warning for each of us! What need is there for both writer and reader to heed that exhortation, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb 3:12).

The cases of Ahithophel (2Sa 17:23), Zimri (1Ki 16:18), and Judas the traitor (Mat 27:5) are the only other instances recorded in Scripture of those who murdered themselves. The awful sin of suicide seems to have occurred very rarely in Israel and not one of the above cases is extenuated by ascribing the deed unto insanity! When the character of these men be examined, we may perceive not only the enormity of the crime by which they put an end to their wretched lives, but the unspeakably fearful consequences which must follow the fatal deed. How can it be otherwise, when men either madly presume on the mercy of God or despair of it, in order to escape temporal suffering or disgrace, despise His gift of life, and rush headlong, uncalled, unto His tribunal? By an act of direct rebellion against God's authority (Exo 20:13) and in daring defiance of His justice, suicides fling

themselves on the bosses of JEHOVAH'S buckler, with the guilt of unrepented sin on their hands.

"And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan" (1Sa 31:8-10). Though Saul had escaped torture at their hands, his body was signally abused—adumbrating, we doubt not, the awful suffering which his soul was now enduring and would continue to endure forever. Saul's self-inflicted death points a most solemn warning for us to earnestly watch and pray that we may be preserved from both presumption and despair, and divinely enabled to bear up under the trials of life and quietly to hope for the salvation of the Lord (Lam 3:26), that Satan may not tempt us to the horrible sin of self-murder, for which the Scriptures hold out *no* hope of forgiveness.

"Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag" (2Sa 1:1). David had returned to Ziklag, where he was engaged with dividing the spoil he had captured and in sending presents to his friends (1Sa 30:26-31). "It was strange he did not leave some spies about the camps to bring him early notice of the issue of the engagement (between the Philistines and the army of Saul)—a sign he desired not Saul's woeful day, nor was impatient to come to the throne, but willing to wait till those tidings were brought to him, which many a one would have sent more than half way to meet. He that believeth does not make haste, takes good news when it comes, and is not weary while it is in the coming" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

"It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also" (2Sa 1:2-4). The Amalekite presented himself as a mourner for the dead king and as a loyal subject to the one who should succeed Saul. No doubt he prided himself that he was the first to pay homage to the sovereign-elect, expecting to be rewarded for bringing such good news (2Sa 4:10), whereas he was the first to receive sentence of death from David's hands.

"And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the

crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord" (2Sa 1:5-10). This is one of the passages seized by atheists and infidels to show that "the Bible is full of contradictions," for the account here given of Saul's death by no means tallies with what is recorded in the previous chapter. But the seeming difficulty is easily solved—1 Samuel 31 contains God's description of Saul's death. 2 Samuel 1 gives man's fabrication. Holy Writ records the lies of God's enemies (Gen 3:4) as well as the true statements of His servants.

From 1 Samuel 31:4, it is definitely established that Saul murdered himself and *was dead* before his armour-bearer committed suicide. That is the unerring record of the Holy Spirit Himself and must not be questioned for a moment. In view of this, it is quite evident that the Amalekite, who now communicated to David the tidings of Saul's death, lied in a number of details. Finding Saul's body with the insignia of royalty upon it—which evidenced both the conceit and rashness of the infatuated king—going into battle with the crown upon his head and thus making himself a mark for the Philistines archers—he seized them (2Sa 1:10) and then formed his story in such a way as he hoped to ingratiate himself with David. Thus did this miserable creature seek to turn the death of Saul to his own personal advantage and scrupled not to depart from the truth in so doing, concluding, from the wickedness of his own heart, that David would be delighted with the news he communicated.

By the death of Saul and Jonathan, the way was now opened for David to the throne. "If a large proportion of Israel stood up for the rights of Ishbosheth, who was a very insignificant person (2Sa 2-4), doubtless far more would have been strenuous for Jonathan. And though *he* would readily have given place, yet his brethren and the people in general would no doubt have made much more opposition to David's ascension to the kingdom" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Yet so far was David from falling into a transport of joy, as the poor Amalekite expected, that he mourned and wept. And so strong was his passion that all about him were similarly affected, "Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword" (2Sa 1:11-12).

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Pro 24:17). There are many who secretly wish for the death of those who have injured them, or who keep them from honors and estates, and who inwardly rejoice even when they pretend to mourn outwardly. But the grace of God subdues this base disposition and forms the mind to a more liberal temper. Nor will the spiritual soul exult in the prospect of worldly advancement for he realizes that such will increase his responsibilities, that he will be surrounded by greater temptations, and called to additional duties and cares. David mourned for Saul out of good will, without constraint—out of compassion without malice, because of the melancholy circumstances attending his death and the terrible consequences which must follow, as well as for Israel's being triumphed over by the enemies of God.

"And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. And David said unto him, How wast

thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed? And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed" (2Sa 1:13-16). As an Amalekite, he was devoted to destruction (Deu 25:17-19) and as the elect-king, David was not required to put the sentence into execution.

The last nine verses of our chapter record the "lamentation" or elegy which David made over Saul and Jonathan. Not only did David rend his clothes, weep, and fast over the decease of his archenemy, but he also composed a poem in his honour—2 Samuel 1:17-27. Nor was it mere sentiment which prompted him. It was also because he looked upon Saul as Israel's "king," the "anointed" of God (2Sa 1:16). This elegy was a noble tribute of respect unto Saul and of tender affection for Jonathan. First, he expressed sorrow over the fall of the mighty (2Sa 1:19). Second, he deprecated the exultation of the enemies of God in the cities of the Philistines (2Sa 1:20). Third, he celebrated Saul's valour and military renown (2Sa 1:21-22). Fourth, he touchingly mentioned the fatal devotion of Jonathan to his father (2Sa 1:23). Fifth, he called upon the daughters of Israel, who had once sung Saul's praises, to now weep over their fallen leader (2Sa 1:24). Sixth, his faults are charitably veiled! Seventh, nothing could truthfully be said of Saul's piety, so David would not utter lies—how this puts to shame the untruthful adulations found in many a funeral oration! Eighth, he ended by memorializing the fervent love of Jonathan for himself.

DISPENSATIONALISM

9. The Word of God

A divine revelation, though it consists of many parts and be given through numerous instruments, must be perfectly consistent and harmonious throughout—to say that the God of truth contradicts Himself is to be guilty of uttering blasphemy. The Holy Scriptures have but one Author, though He employed many mouthpieces, yet "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2Pe 1:21). The divine Author of the Scriptures is immutable, though He "at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" and "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb 1:1-2), nevertheless, there is absolute agreement between them. Therefore the Word of truth sets forth *one* system of doctrine, *one* way of salvation, *one* rule of faith. We never read of the "doctrines of God," but always of "the doctrine" (*see* Deu 32:2, Pro 4:2, Mat 7:28, Joh 7:17, Rom 16:17, 1Ti 1:10; 4:16; 6:3, Ti 2:10, and contrast Mar 7:7, Col 2:22, 1Ti 4:1, Heb 13:9), because it is one single, intricate, organic whole.

Though the Scriptures were penned by forty different writers, of every variety of culture and condition, during the space of sixteen centuries, that is, through about fifty successive generations of mankind, yet, without collusion, there is perfect agreement between them. Though those forty writers lived in different ages of the world, and were

men of vastly varied interests and capacities, yet they were of one sentiment, they all spoke in substance the same things, they all delivered the same doctrine, they all enjoined the same moral duties. There are no contradictions in their several productions, no jarring discords between the notes they sounded. All is of a piece. They concur in their statements and exactly coincide in the truth they taught. All were of the same judgment, all sought to enforce the same principles, all applied them to the same practical purpose.

The character of their writings varied as much as the men who composed them. There is history and poetry, law and lyrics, prophecy and ritual. Yet amid all this diversity, there is an underlying unity, which is not so much one of mechanism as one of organism. One part depends upon another, both for its interpretation and its completion. Links of connection run throughout the whole, like the nerves of the body uniting its varied members. There is an essential agreement between all parts of the Bible—certain conspicuous concepts pervade its whole, like golden cords on which all else is strung—such as the Messiah-Mediator and the kingdom of God, sin and salvation, law and grace, sacrifice and priesthood, duty and privilege. There is also a marvelous *progress* of doctrine to be observed throughout—where one writer leaves a theme, another picks it up and carries it forward.

Though separated by four hundred years, there is an unmistakable connection between the Old Testament and the New. What was latent in the former, is patent in the latter. What is concealed in the one, is revealed in the other. Only one explanation of the above phenomena is adequate or possible—one Controlling Mind spanned the centuries from Moses to John, superintending and directing each instrument. It is like an orchestra, the members of which take up their different parts, playing what was previously composed for them, and all uniting in one grand harmony. Or we may compare the same unto the building of one of the great cathedrals which took centuries to complete—scores of workmen, of different calibre, being engaged thereon, yet all executing the plan of the one architect. The unmistakable and perfect *unity* of the Scriptures plainly manifests their one divine Author.

The Scriptures as a whole constitute an organism, instinct with the life of God. A whole consisting of many parts, exquisitely correlated and vitally interdependent upon each other. God so controlled all the agents He employed, and has so co-ordinated their efforts, as to produce one single living Book. Within this organic unity there is great variety, but no discord. Man's body is but one, though it is made up of many members, diverse in size, character, and operation. The rainbow is but one—though it reflects distinctly the seven prismatic rays, yet they are harmoniously blended together. So it is with the Bible. Its unity appears in the perfect accord of doctrine taught throughout—the oneness yet triunity of God, the deity and humanity of Christ united in one Person, the everlasting covenant which secures the salvation of the entire election of grace, the justification of the ungodly by faith alone, the highway of holiness as the only path leading to heaven, are plainly revealed in Old and New Testament alike.

The question may be raised, if the Holy Scriptures are a strict unit, then why has God Himself divided them into two testaments? That is an interesting question, which we cannot here fully investigate. It may help us a little to ask, why has God appointed *two*

principal heavenly bodies to illumine the earth, the moon and the sun? Why, too, is the human frame duplex, having two legs and arms, two ears and eyes, two lungs and kidneys? Is not the answer the same in each case—to augment and supplement each other. But returning to our first inquiry, four replies may be suggested. First, to more distinctly set forth the *two* covenants, which are the basis of all God's dealings with mankind—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Second, to show more plainly the *two* separate companies which are united in that one body which constitutes the Church, redeemed Jews and redeemed Gentiles. Third, to demonstrate more plainly the providence of God, using the Jews to be, for many centuries, the custodians of the Old Testament, which condemns them for their rejection of Christ, and employing the Papists, through the “dark ages,” to preserve the New Testament, which denounces their idolatry. Fourth, that one might confirm the other—type in antitype, prophecy in fulfillment.

“The mutual relations of the two testaments. These two main divisions resemble the dual structure of the human body, where the two eyes and ears, hands and feet correspond to and complement one another. Not only is there a general, but a special mutual fitness. They need therefore to be studied together, side by side, to be compared even in lesser details, for in nothing are they independent of each other; and the closer the inspection the minuter appears the adaptations, and the more intimate the association....The two testaments are like the two cherubim of the mercy seat, facing in opposite directions, yet facing each other and foreshadowing with glory one mercy seat; or again, are like the human body bound together by joints and bands and ligaments, by one brain and heart, one pair of lungs, one system of respiration, circulation, digestion, sensor and motor nerves, where division is destruction” (A.T. Pierson, 1837-1911, from “Knowing the Scriptures”).

But what has all the above to do with the subject we are now investigating? Much, very much. The central design of “Dispensationalism” is not to make manifest the accord of Scripture, but the discord between that which pertained unto the “dispensation of law” and that which obtains under the “dispensation of grace.” Studied efforts are made to pit passage against passage, and all sound principles of exegesis are thrown to the winds in order to accomplish this purpose. As a sample of what we have reference to, Exodus 21:24 is cited, “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,” and then against this is quoted Matthew 5:39, “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Then it is triumphantly asserted that these two passages can *only* be “reconciled” by allocating them to different people in different ages. And with such superficial handling of the sacred Scriptures, thousands of gullible people are deceived. Why, if such *were* the case, not only would large sections of God's Word *be no longer* “profitable” for *us* (2Ti 3:16-17), but most of the Old Testament would be *of no more value than an obsolete almanac!*

Those possessing a “Scofield Bible” may turn to Exodus 21:24, and they will see that in the margin opposite to it the editor refers to “Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21; cf. Matthew 5:38-44, 1 Peter 2:19-21,” upon which this brief comment is made, “The provision in Exodus is *law* and righteous; the New Testament passages, *grace* and merciful.” How far Mr. Scofield was consistent with himself may be seen by a reference to what he states on page 989, at the beginning of the New Testament under “The Four Gospels” where he expressly affirms, “The sermon on the mount is law, *not grace*” (italics

ours). Verily, "The legs of the lame are not equal." In his marginal note to Exodus 21:24, Mr. Scofield cites Matthew 5:38-44 as "grace." In his Introduction to the Four Gospels, he declares Matthew 5-7 is "law, and not grace"—which of these assertions did he wish his readers to believe?

Still the question may be asked, how are you going to reconcile Exodus 21:24 with Matthew 5:38-44? Our answer is, there is nothing between them *to* "reconcile." There is nothing in them which clashes. Exodus 21:24 contains statutes for *public magistrates* to enforce. Matthew 5:38-44 lays down rules for *private individuals* to live by! Why do not these "Rightly Dividers" *rightly* "divide" the Scriptures and distinguish between what belongs to different classes? That Exodus 21:24 *does* contain statutes for "public magistrates" to enforce is clearly established by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In Deuteronomy 19:21, the same "statute" is again recorded, and if the reader will but turn back to Deuteronomy 19:18, he will there read, "And the *judges* shall make diligent inquisition" etc.! It would be real *mercy unto the public* if our judges dealt thus with conscienceless criminals today!

Ere leaving what has been before us in the last three paragraphs, let it be pointed out that when our blessed Lord added to Matthew 5:38, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you" (Mat 5:44), He was *not* advancing a sentiment which had never previously been revealed. No, *the same* gracious principle of conduct had been enforced in the *Old Testament*! In Exodus 23:4-5 Moses had commanded, "If thou meet thine *enemy's* ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." Again, in Proverbs 25:21, we read, "If thine *enemy* be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink"!

The same God who bids *us*, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath" (Rom 12:17-19), also commanded His people in *Old Testament* times, "Thou *shalt not avenge*, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD" (Lev 19:18), and therefore was David grateful to Abigail for dissuading him from taking vengeance on Nabal, "Blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, *and from avenging myself* with mine own hand" (1Sa 25:33). So far was the Old Testament from allowing any spirit of bitterness, malice, or revenge, it expressly declared, "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee" (Pro 20:22). And again, "*Rejoice not* when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Pro 24:17). And again, "*Say not*, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work" (Pro 24:29)!

As another example of the fearful confusion which now prevails, take the following from page 18 of Mr. I. M. Haldeman's, "How to Study the Bible." Under "Classification of Dispensational Truth," he states, "It is not only necessary to know the Dispensations, but eminently important to keep truth in its proper dispensational relation. To put the truth

applicable to one dispensation into another is to risk confusion, and not only theological, but spiritual death. Take, for example, the imprecatory psalms, as indicated in Psalms 58:10; 137:8-9. These Scriptures are full of imprecation and breathe the spirit not of forgiveness, but vengeance on the enemy. This spirit seems such a contradiction to the age in which we live, such a contradiction to the attitude of love, grace, and forgiveness occupied by the church, that many efforts have been made by good Christians to reconcile them with the teachings of Christianity; others finding the attempt useless have been led to expurgate them altogether from their Bibles."

Yes, Mr. Haldeman, these Scriptures do breathe the spirit of "vengeance on the enemy," but *whose* "enemy"? Why not *rightly* "divide" the Word on these passages? Was David thirsting for "vengeance" on his *personal* enemies? Read his history and ponder his magnanimous treatment of Saul! Let Scripture interpret Scripture and there will be no difficulty. Hear him saying, "The enemies *of the LORD* shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away" (Psa 37:20). "Let God arise, let *his* enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him" (Psa 68:1). "For, lo, *thine* enemies, O LORD, for, lo, *thine* enemies shall perish" (Psa 92:9). It is true that in many Psalms David speaks of "mine enemies." In some he refers to his *spiritual* foes—his lusts and sins. In others, it is the Spirit of prophecy speaking through him messianically, as in Psalm 110:1-2. In yet others, he so identifies himself with God that the Lord's enemies are *his*!

But it is affirmed these imprecations of the Psalmist against enemies is quite at variance with the benign and gracious spirit which characterizes the present "dispensation of grace." We reply that such an objector errs grievously, "*not* knowing the Scriptures." Why, the New Testament "breathes" identically the same "spirit" as the Old. Did not Peter say to one who was deceiving the people and who sought to purchase the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, "Thy money *perish with thee*" (Act 8:20)? Did not the apostle Paul write, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema* Maranatha" (1 Cor 16:22)? Did he not also affirm, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*. As we said before, so say I now *again*, [the resistance of the human heart to such an imprecation requiring this repetition] If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, *let him be accursed*" (Gal 1:8-9). Did he not also write to the Galatians, "I would they were *even cut off* which trouble you" (Gal 5:12)? Did he not say, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him *according to his works*" (2Ti 4:14)! One really wonders how much these "Dispensationalists" really read *their Bibles*!

We are well aware that what has been pointed out in the last paragraph will not be at all palatable to those who are filled with the sickly sentimentality of this degenerate age, nevertheless, it is the Word *of God*! They who want to see capital punishment abolished, and are in favour of turning penitentiaries into social clubs, where the prisoners are coddled and pampered—given tobacco, regaled with the radio, and provided with dining rooms superior to a hotel—are not likely to welcome such expressions of holy hatred of that which is dishonouring to God. For his own part, the writer desires grace to emulate the Psalmist when he said, "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me

therefore, ye bloody men. For they *speake* against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. *Do not I hate them*, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them *mine* enemies” (Psa 139:19, 22).

As one more sample of the excuseless ignorance betrayed by these “Dispensationalists,” we quote from E. W. Bullinger’s “How to Enjoy the Bible.” On pages 108, 110, he says, “*Law and Grace*. To those who lived under the Law it could rightly and truly be said, ‘It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us’ (Deu 6:25). But to those who live in this present Dispensation of grace, it is as truly declared, ‘By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight’ (Rom 3:20). But this is the very opposite of Deuteronomy 6:25! What then are we to say or to do? Which of these two statements is true? and which is false? The answer is that neither is false. But both are true if we rightly divide the Word of truth as to its Dispensational truth and teaching....Two words distinguish the two dispensations. ‘Do’ distinguishes the former; ‘Done’ the latter. Then, salvation depended on what man was to *do*; now it depends upon what Christ has *done*.” It is by such statements as these that “unstable souls” are “beguiled.”

Think of a man with such a reputation for academical learning pitting Deuteronomy 6:25 against Romans 3:20—as well might he argue that fire is “the very opposite of water”—nevertheless each has its use in its right place—the one to cook by, the other for refreshment and cleansing. Think of one who posed as a teacher of preachers being so culpably ignorant as to affirm that under the old dispensation, “Salvation depended on what man was to *do*.” Salvation has *never* been procured by human merits, on the ground of any human performances. Read Genesis 4:4; 15:6; Exodus 12:13; Leviticus 17:11, Psalm 51:17, etc., and the error of such a statement is at once apparent. Deuteronomy 6:25 is paralleled by such verses as Matthew 5:20, James 2:20-26, 1 John 2:29. Deuteronomy 6:25 is speaking of *practical* “righteousness” in the daily walk of God’s people, whereas Romans 3:20 is affirming the impossibility of *acceptance with God* on the ground of creature-doings—true in all ages.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Five)

What was the head and the front of the offence of this people? Their laws were different from those of all other nations. They would not observe the religious institutions that were ordained by man. The civil law of the countries of their captivity it was their duty to obey. Their God commanded them to, “Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it” (Jer 29:7). But to neglect the ordinances of their God, or to observe the religious rites appointed by man, they had no license. Why were the Jews to be blamed for the singularity of their institutions, for their

scrupulous separation from other nations, and for their firmness in refusing compliance with the rites of all other religions? If their laws were singular, were they not the laws of God? Why do kings and rulers pretend to interfere between God and His people? Why do wretched mortals assume an authority to set aside what God enjoins? Let Christians in every country render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but to God the things that are God's. If rulers must usurp the throne of God, let them attempt to alter the rising of the sun or regulate the changes of the moon, but let them not dare to meddle with the laws of the kingdom of Christ.

The allegations of Haman against the Jews are still substantially the ground of accusation against those who fully follow the churches planted by the apostles, and refuse compliance with all the institutions of man in the things of God. They are held up as a singular kind of people, who, by the peculiarity of their religious observances and their uncompliant spirit with respect to every deviation from the ordinances of God, manifest disaffection to the government of the country. In their religious observances, they are accused as being "diverse from all people." Fear of this accusation, more, perhaps, than any other cause, keeps the people of God from discovering the ordinances of Christ and induces them to accommodate, as far as possible, to some of the great sects in the countries where they live. Israel grew weary of the government of God and desired a king that they might be like other nations. How long will the children of God neglect the laws of His kingdom! When will they return to the order and ordinances of His house!

How grateful ought Christians to be who live in a land of liberty! What a blessing it is to have the exercise of their religion secured to them by the laws of the state! If any of them are so ill-informed as not to be impressed with the value of this privilege, let them think of the Jews in the time of Esther—let them think of the state of Christians in this country in ages past—and in some other countries at the present moment. What a wretched thing it is to live in a country whose rulers assume the authority of God and dictate in the things of religion! What a revolting idea to live in a country where an incensed favorite may receive a present of the lives of a whole nation! How degraded is the state of man in a country where an insolent courtier offers the sovereign a price for the lives of a whole people!

Yet the Christian has nothing to fear in any country. If he is called to suffer, it will be for God's glory and his own unspeakable advantage. If God has no purpose to serve by the sufferings of His people, He can, even under the most despotic governments, procure them rest. *Jesus rules in the midst of His enemies and is Master of the resolves of despots.* He restrains their wrath or makes it praise Him. If He chooses, He can give His people power even with the most capricious tyrants. They are as safe in the provinces of the empire of Ahasuerus as in the dominions of Great Britain. The history of the book of Esther demonstrates that *there is no danger from which the Lord cannot rescue His people*, even through the medium of the ordinary course of events. Without a single miracle, He brings them from the very brink of ruin and precipitates their enemies into the abyss. We see them, as a nation, formerly given over to destruction by an irrevocable decree, yet they escape without the suffering of an individual. "And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it

seemeth good to thee" (Est 3:10-11). Even the power of the king himself could not revoke the grant. Letters were sent to all the provinces of the empire, to secure the entire extirpation of the hated race. The enmity of the nations to the Jews is simulated by their avarice. They are permitted "to take the spoil of them for a prey" (Est 3:13). Can human wisdom descry any possible means of escape for the captives of Israel in the midst of their enemies? Yet God is their Deliverer!

Haman now thought his victory secure. The royal decree is obtained and messengers are sent out with it to all the king's lieutenants in the provinces, in the languages of all the nations subject to Persia. "And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed." Little did that unthinking monarch reflect on the misery to which his rash indulgence of a favorite had consigned so many of his innocent subjects. Could absolute monarchs get a view of the mischief caused by the oppression of their wicked favorites, they would often shrink from it with horror. Many a bloody decree originates not so much in the cruelty of their nature, as in the seducing flatteries of their courtiers. They watch the pliant hour, and in the moment of good-humor, they obtain the fatal grant. From that moment, they keep the matter at a distance from his ear, and divert his attention by the gratifications of intemperance and debauchery. How insensible is the mind of men in certain situations! "There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart, it does not feel for man." Despots and their sycophants sit down to their drunken banquets, after giving decrees that involve whole nations in misery!

As God can protect His people under the greatest despotism, so the utmost civil liberty is no safety to them without the immediate protection of His almighty arm. I fear that Christians at present in this country have too great a confidence in political institutions and in the enlightened views of the public on the rights of conscience. We hear more boasting of the march of mind than of the government of God. It is thought impossible, into whatever hands power may fall, that rulers in this country should ever attempt to effect uniformity in religion or apply force in the affairs of religion. Such an opinion is as unfounded in the philosophy of human nature as it is destitute of the authority of history and of the Word of God. There are not wanting some symptoms of the rise of Haman, and if he does not at length obtain a present of the lives of his enemies, it will be owing, *not to the light of our politicians*, but to the overruling providence of God in opposition to that light. At all events, let Christians confide in the power and watchfulness of their God, not in the schemes of fanatical politicians. Even at the present moment, I am confident that there are many places in the empire where there is not entire liberty of conscience. There may be the liberty of the statute book when there is danger from the mob, and where there is not perfect safety for the Christian in exercising, and in publishing, and spreading his religion, there is not practical liberty of conscience. To have liberty of conscience, we must not only be freed from all force constraining us to profess a religion which we do not assume, we must also be safe in the most active and public efforts to spread our own. Let us now attend to the providence of God effecting the deliverance of His people from this awful danger and precipitating their enemies into the pit which they had prepared for others.

The disposal of the lots cast before Haman, to ascertain the most lucky day for striking the intended blow, attracts our attention as the first providential circumstance for the

salvation of the Jews. Even before Haman had obtained the royal consent for destroying them, he had used divination to discover the most fortunate time for executing his purpose. *Shall the oracle of Satan be compelled to speak for God?* Shall the god of this world lose all his sagacity when he comes to fix the destruction of the people of the Lord? *Why did he choose the last month in the whole year*, when the execution of his plan would have been promoted by immediate dispatch? "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" (Pro 16:33). He works His own will by the counsels of demons, as well as through the agency of the angels of His presence. "In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar" (Est 3:7). From the directing of this oracle, the day of execution was fixed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, that is, more than eleven months after the decree. Whether the laws of nature or the agency of infernal spirits guided this answer, it was evidently *ordained by God* for the salvation of His people. Had the day of execution been immediate, there was nothing to prevent Haman's wicked purpose from taking effect. But his very superstition is made to co-operate in God's plan for the preservation of Israel. When the devil himself is consulted, he gives the most foolish advice to his friends when God has any purpose to fulfill by it. He that was a murderer of the saints from the beginning is here made an instrument to effect their preservation.

We have here a key to the providence of God with respect to the heathen oracles. Though they uttered the responses of demons, they were made the means of fulfilling the purposes of God. Satan by them rules the world, but God in them overruled Satan himself. While the devil was the god of this world and held men captive at his pleasure, *Jehovah ruled the earth* as absolutely as He did the angels of heaven. While men in general were serving the prince of darkness, the Lord effected His own sovereign purposes through their agency. Human wisdom may exclaim, How is this! Let it fathom the depths of the divine wisdom before it repeats the question. If God is God, the rebellion of devils and of man *must be* in some way for His glory.

By a like expedient, Jehovah provided that Jonah should be cast into the sea. He raised a tremendous storm against the ship in which the refractory prophet was sailing. But what providence is in a storm? The philosopher sees in this nothing but what he calls nature and the laws of nature. "But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea" (Jon 1:4). Although storms and earthquakes, and pestilence, and thunder, and war, and famine may all be brought about by natural causes, they are all the work of the Almighty. But when the storm is raised, how is it to manifest Jonah? It is through the impression of the heathen mariners that it was sent as a judgment. Why were they struck with this impression now? Did they look on all storms in this light? or did they judge from the peculiarly tremendous nature of this tempest? In whatever manner the impression came, it was to fulfill the purpose of God. But even with this impression, how is the guilty person to be detected? How are these heathen to find out the will of the God of Israel? It is through the means of their own superstition. It is by casting lots, and though God *always* disposes the lot, there is no reason to believe that He will always in this way manifest a guilty person. Were this the case, rulers would have no difficulty in detecting guilt, and discriminating between the guilty and the innocent. But the heathen mariners acted on their own superstitious opinion,

which was nothing better than the origin of dueling, and in this instance God spake through their oracle: "So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah."

Here, then, we see the way of Providence. The Ruler of the world effects His purposes by every agent, and makes use of the opinions and motives of the resolutions and actions of all men. Nay, He overrules their very crimes to fulfill His plans. In these sentiments of the heathen mariners, however erroneous they are in some respects, yet it is pleasing to see the strong conviction of an overruling Providence. This is strikingly obvious, both in their opinion of the cause of the storm and in their expedient of the lots. As Aelian has observed, "Atheism is the refinement of speculation and not the dictate of human nature. No one of the barbarians," says he, "ever fell into atheism or started a doubt as to the existence of the gods. They have no such discussion as, Are there gods? and if there are gods, do they take care of us? Neither Indian, nor Celt, nor Egyptian, ever conceived such a notion as Epicurus and the atheistic Grecian sages."

Now, this observation of the heathen historian is of great importance. In whatever way the impression has been received, it is general that divine Providence rules in all the affairs of man. This view of nature is only stifled by some of the greatest fools in human shape, who style themselves philosophers.

But let us return to the history of Mordecai. How wonderful is the providence of God in restraining Haman from taking immediate vengeance on receiving a fresh insult, as he returned in triumph from Esther's banquet! "Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless *Haman refrained himself*:" (Est 5:9-10). There is something more wonderful in this than even in a miracle. In my view, Almighty power would not have been so illustriously displayed had God interfered to save Mordecai by causing the earth to open and swallow his adversary, as by ruling his impetuous passions without interfering with the freedom of his determinations. Haman has a royal irrevocable decree for the destruction of the whole Jewish nation. He is elated beyond measure by being the only person invited to the queen's banquet with the king. He is again insulted by the man whom he so much abhorred. His mind is full of wrath, yet he refrains from immediate violence! Where did he learn his self-command? Look at the mouths of the hungry lions with Daniel before them. Look again at the enraged Haman and Mordecai untouched in his presence. God, who stopped the mouths of the lions, and preserved His children in the furnace, manifested here a more wonderful power in directing the free will of a bloody persecutor, armed with the authority of the Persian empire. It was Haman's own action—"he restrained himself," yet it was the working of the providence of God. Not so wonderful would it be to see a ship standing motionless in the midst of the tumult of the waves, or the raging billows rolling to the shore without touching the rocks, as to see Haman "restraining himself" on *this* occasion. Let the children of God read, and believe, and rejoice. When their enemies are maddened with rage, their God can make them restrain themselves, even without changing their heart. By His inscrutable providence, they willingly resolve to refrain from injury or to delay vengeance, even while they feel no pity.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

3. *Its Problem*

In this and the following article our aim will be fourfold. First, to demonstrate the impossibility of any sinner obtaining acceptance and favour with God on the ground of his own performances. Second, to show that the saving of a sinner presented a problem which nought but omniscience could solve, but that the consummate wisdom of God has devised a way whereby He can pronounce righteous a guilty transgressor of His law without impeaching His veracity, sully His holiness, or ignoring the claims of justice. Yea, in such a way that all His perfections have been displayed and magnified, and the Son of His love glorified. Third, point out the sole ground on which an awakened conscience can find solid and stable peace. Fourth, seek to give God's children a clearer understanding of the exceeding riches of divine grace, that their hearts may be drawn out in fervent praise unto the Author of "so great salvation."

But let it be pointed out at the onset that any reader who has never seen himself under the white light of God's holiness and who has never felt His Word cutting him to the very quick will be unable to fully enter into the force of what we are about to write. Yea, in all probability, he who is unregenerate is likely to take decided exception unto much of what will be said, denying that any such difficulty exists in the matter of a merciful God pardoning one of His offending creatures. Or, if he does not dissent to that extent, yet he will most likely consider that we have grossly exaggerated the various elements in the case we are about to present, that we have pictured the sinner's condition in far darker hues than was warranted. This must be so, for he has no experimental acquaintance with God, nor is he conscious of the fearful plague of his own heart.

The natural man cannot endure the thought of being thoroughly searched by God. The last thing he desires is to pass beneath the all-seeing eye of his Maker and Judge, so that his every thought and desire, his most secret imagination and motive, stands exposed before Him. It is indeed a most solemn experience when we are made to feel with the psalmist, "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me" (Psa 139:1-5).

Yes, dear reader, the very last thing which the natural man desires is to be searched through and through by God, and have his real character exposed to view. But when God undertakes to do this very thing—which He either will do in grace in this life or in judgment in the day to come—there is no escape for us. Then it is we may well exclaim, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me" (Psa 139:7-11). Then it is we shall be assured,

“Yea, the darkness *hideth not from* thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psa 139:12).

Then it is that the soul is awakened to a realization of *Who it is* with whom it has to do. Then it is that he now perceives something of the high claims of God upon him, the just requirements of His law, the demands of His holiness. Then it is that he realizes how completely he has failed to consider those claims, how fearfully he has disregarded that law, how miserably he falls short of meeting those demands. Now it is that he perceives he has been “a transgressor from the womb” (Isa 48:8), that so far from having lived to glorify His Maker, he has done nought but follow the course of this world and fulfill the lust of the flesh. Now it is he realizes that there is “*no soundness*” in him but, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, “wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores” (Isa 1:6). Now it is he is made to see that all his righteousness are as “filthy rags” (Isa 64:6).

“It is easy for anyone in the cloisters of the schools to indulge himself in idle speculations of the merit of works to justify men, but when he comes into the presence of God, he must bid farewell to these amusements, for there the business is transacted with seriousness, and no ludicrous logomachy practiced. To this point, then, must our attention be directed, if we wish to make any useful inquiry concerning true righteousness—how we can answer the celestial Judge when He shall call us to an account. Let us place that Judge before our eyes, not according to the spontaneous imaginations of our minds, but according to the descriptions given of Him in the Scripture, which represents Him as one whose refulgence eclipses the stars, whose power melts the mountains, whose anger shakes the earth, whose wisdom takes the subtle in their own craftiness, whose purity makes all things appear polluted, whose righteousness even the angels are unable to bear, who acquits not the guilty, whose vengeance, when it is once kindled, penetrates even to the abyss of hell” (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

Ah, my reader, tremendous indeed are the effects produced in the soul when one is really brought into the presence of God and is granted a sight of His awesome majesty. While we measure ourselves by our fellow men, it is easy to reach the conclusion that there is not much wrong with us, but when we approach the dread tribunal of ineffable holiness, we form an entirely different estimate of our character and conduct. While we are occupied with earthly objects, we may pride ourselves in the strength of our visive faculty, but fix the gaze steadily on the midday sun and under its dazzling brilliance the weakness of the eye will at once become apparent. In like manner, while I compare myself with other sinners I can but form a wrong estimate of myself, but if I gauge my life by the plummet of God’s law, and do so in the light of His holiness, I must “abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

But not only has sin corrupted man’s being, it has *changed his relation to God*. It has “alienated” him (Eph 4:18) and brought him under His righteous condemnation. Man has broken God’s law in thought and word and deed, not once, but times without number. By the divine tribunal, he is pronounced an incorrigible transgressor, a guilty rebel. He is under the curse of his Maker. The law demands that its punishment shall be inflicted upon him. Justice clamours for satisfaction. The sinner’s case is deplorable, then, to the last degree. When this is painfully felt by the convicted conscience, its agonized possessor

cries out, “*How then* can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4). How indeed! Let us now consider the various elements which enter into this problem.

1. *The requirements of God’s law.* “Every question therefore, respecting justification necessarily brings before us the judicial courts of God. The principles of those courts must be determined by God alone. Even to earthly governors we concede the right of establishing their own laws and appointing the mode of their enforcement. Shall we then accord this title to man and withhold it from the all-wise and almighty God? Surely no presumption can be greater than for the creature to sit in judgment on the Creator and pretend to determine what should or should not be the methods of His government. It must be our place reverently to listen to His own exposition of the principles of His own courts and humbly to thank Him for His goodness in condescending to explain to us what those principles are. As sinners, we can have no claim on God. We *do* have claim to a revelation that should acquaint us with His ways.

“The judicial principles of the government of God, are, as might be expected, based upon the absolute perfectness of His own holiness. This was fully shown both in the prohibitory and in the mandatory commandments of the law as given at Sinai. That law prohibited not only wrong deeds and wrong counsels of heart, but it went deeper still. It prohibited even wrong desires and wrong tendencies, saying, ‘Thou shalt not be concupiscent’—that is, thou shalt not have, *even momentarily*, one desire or tendency that is contrary to the perfectness of God. And then as to its positive requirements, it demanded the perfect, unreserved, perpetual surrender of soul and body, with all its powers, to God and to His service. Not only was it required, that love to Him—love perfect and unremitted—should dwell as a living principle in the heart, but also that it should be developed in action and that unvaryingly. The mode also of the development throughout was required to be as perfect as the principle from which the development sprang.

“If any among the children of men be able to substantiate a claim to perfectness such as this, the courts of God are ready to recognize it. The God of truth will recognize a truthful claim wherever it is found. But if we are unable to present any such claim—if corruption be found in us and in our ways—if in anything we have fallen short of God’s glory, then it is obvious that however willing the courts of God may be to recognize perfectness wherever it exists, such willingness can afford no ground of hope to those, who, instead of having perfectness, have sins and short-comings unnumbered” (B. W. Newton, 1807-1899).

2. *The indictment preferred against us.* “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward” (Isa 1:2-4). The eternal God justly charges us with having broken all His commandments—some in act, some in word, all of them in thought and imagination.

The enormity of this charge is heightened by the fact that against light and knowledge we chose the evil and forsook the good. That again and again we deliberately turned aside from God's righteous law and went astray like lost sheep, following the evil desires and devices of our own hearts. Above, we find God complaining that inasmuch as we are His creatures, we ought to have obeyed Him, that inasmuch as we owe our very lives to His daily care, we ought to have rendered Him fealty instead of disobedience, and have been His loyal subjects instead of turning traitors to His throne. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us, but a statement of fact is declared which it is impossible for us to gainsay. We are ungrateful, unruly, ungodly creatures. Who would keep a horse that refused to work? Who would retain a dog which barked and flew at us? Yet we have broken God's Sabbaths, despised His reproofs, abused His mercies.

3. *The sentence of the law.* This is clearly announced in the divine oracles, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal 3:10). Whoever violates a single precept of the divine law exposes himself to the displeasure of God and to punishment as the expression of that displeasure. No allowance is made for ignorance, no distinction is made between persons, no relaxation of its strictness is permissible, "The soul that sinneth it shall die" is its inexorable pronouncement. No exception is made whether the transgressor be young or old, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile. "The wages of sin is death," for "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom 1:18).

4. *The Judge Himself is inflexibly just.* In the high court of divine justice, God takes the law in its strictest and sternest aspect, and judges rigidly according to the letter. "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things...who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom 2:2, 6). God is inexorably righteous and will not show any partiality either to the law or to its transgressor. The Most High has determined that His holy law shall be faithfully upheld and its sanctions strictly enforced.

What would this country be like if all its judges ceased to uphold and enforce the laws of the land? What conditions would prevail were sentimental mercy to reign at the expense of righteousness? Now God is the Judge of all the earth and the moral Ruler of the universe. Holy Writ declares that "justice and judgment," and not pity and clemency, are the "habitation" of His "throne" (Psa 89:14). God's attributes do not conflict with each other. His mercy does not override His justice, nor is His grace ever shown at the expense of righteousness. Each of His perfections is given free course. For God to give a sinner entrance into heaven simply because He loved him, would be like a judge sheltering an escaped convict in his own home merely because he pitied him. Scripture emphatically declares that God, "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:7).

5. *The sinner is unquestionably guilty.* It is not merely that he has infirmities or that he is not as good as he ought to be. He has set at nought God's authority, violated His commandments, trodden His laws under foot. And this is true not only of a certain class of offenders, but "*all* the world" is "guilty before God" (Rom 3:19). "There is none righteous, no, not one...They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:10, 12). It is impossible for any man to

clear himself from this fearful charge. He can neither show that the crimes of which he is accused have not been committed, nor that having been committed, he had a right to do them. He can neither disprove the charges which the law preferred against him, nor justify himself in the perpetration of them.

Here then is how the case stands. The law demands personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity to its precepts, in heart and act, in motive and performance. God charges each one of us with having failed to meet those just demands and declares we have violated His commandments in thought and word and deed. The law therefore pronounces upon us a sentence of condemnation, curses us, and demands the infliction of its penalty, which is death. The One before whose tribunal we stand is omniscient and cannot be deceived or imposed upon. He is inflexibly just and swayed by no sentimental considerations. We, the accused, are guilty, unable to refute the accusations of the law, unable to vindicate our sinful conduct, unable to offer any satisfaction or atonement for our crimes. Truly, our case is desperate to the last degree.

Here, then, is the problem. How can God justify the willful transgressor of His law without justifying his sins? How can God deliver him from the penalty of His broken law without compromising His holiness and going back upon His word that He will "by no means clear the guilty"? How can life be granted the guilty culprit without repealing the sentence, "The soul that sinneth it shall die"? How can mercy be shown to the sinner without justice being flouted? It is a problem which must forever have baffled every finite intelligence. Yet, blessed be His name, God *has*, in His consummate wisdom, devised a way whereby the "chief of sinners" may be dealt with by Him as though he were perfectly innocent. Nay more, He pronounces him *righteous*, up to the required standard of the law, and *entitled to the reward* of eternal life. How this can be must remain for our next article.

A PRAYER AND CONFESSION

O most merciful God! I rejoice that Thou dost reign over the universe with a sovereign sway, so that Thou dost according to Thy will, in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Thou art the Maker of my body and Father of my spirit, and Thou hast a perfect right to dispose of me in that manner which will most effectually promote Thy glory. And I know that whatsoever Thou doest is right, and wise, and just, and good. And whatever may be my eternal destiny, I rejoice in the assurance that Thy great name will be glorified in me. But as Thou hast been pleased to reveal Thy mercy and Thy grace to our fallen miserable world, and as the Word of this salvation has been preached unto me, inviting me to accept of eternal life upon the gracious terms of the Gospel, I do cordially receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour and only Redeemer, believing sincerely the whole testimony which Thou hast given respecting His divine character, His real incarnation, His unspotted and holy life, His numerous and beneficent miracles, His expiatory and meritorious death, and His glorious resurrection and ascension. I believe also

in His supreme exaltation, in His prevalent intercession for His chosen people, in His affectionate care and aid afforded to His suffering members here below, and in His second coming to receive His humble followers to dwell with Himself in heaven, and to take vengeance on His obstinate enemies. My only hope and confidence of being saved rests simply on the mediatorial work and prevailing intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, in consequence of which the Holy Spirit is graciously sent to make application of Christ's redemption, by working faith in us, and repentance unto life, and rendering us meet for the heavenly inheritance, by sanctifying us in the whole man, spirit and soul and body.

Grant, gracious God that the rich blessings of the new covenant may be freely bestowed on Thy unworthy servant. I acknowledge that I have no claim to Thy favour on account of any goodness in me by nature, for alas, there dwelleth in me, that is in my flesh, no good thing, nor on account of any works of righteousness done by me. For all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Neither am I able to make atonement for any one of my innumerable transgressions, which I confess before Thee, are not only many in number, but heinous in their nature, justly deserving Thy displeasure and wrath. So that if I were immediately sent to hell, Thou wouldst be altogether just in my condemnation. Although I trust that I have endeavoured to serve Thee with some degree of sincerity, yet whatever good thing I have ever done, or even thought, I ascribe entirely to Thy grace, without which I can do nothing acceptable in Thy sight. And I am deeply convinced that my best duties have fallen far short of the perfection of Thy law and have been so mingled with sin in the performance that I might be justly condemned for the most fervent prayer I ever made. And I would confess with shame and contrition that I am not only chargeable with sin in the act, but that there is a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, aiming to bring me into captivity to the law of sin and death. This corrupt nature is the source of innumerable thoughts and desires, and damps the exercise of faith and love, and stands in the way of well-doing, so that when I would do good, evil is present with me. And so deep and powerful is this remaining depravity, that all efforts to eradicate or subdue it are vain without the aid of divine grace. And when at any time I obtain a glimpse of the depth and turpitude of the sin of my nature, I am overwhelmed and constrained to exclaim with Job, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

And now, *righteous Lord God Almighty*, I would not attempt to conceal any of my actual transgressions, however vile and shameful they are. But would penitently confess them before Thee, and would plead in my defense nothing but the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died, the Just for the unjust, to bring me near to God. For His sake alone do I ask or expect the rich blessings necessary to my salvation. For although I am unworthy, He is most worthy. Though I have no righteousness, He has provided by His expiatory death and by His holy life a complete justifying righteousness, in which spotless robe I pray that I may be clothed. So that Thou, my righteous Judge, wilt see no sin in me, but wilt acquit me from every accusation and justify me freely by Thy grace, through the righteousness of my Lord and Saviour, with whom Thou art ever well-pleased. And my earnest prayer is that *Jesus* may save me from my sins, as well as from their punishment, that I may be redeemed from all iniquity, as well as from the condemnation of the law, that the work of sanctification may be carried on in my soul by Thy Word and Spirit, until it be perfected at Thine appointed time. And grant, O Lord! that as long as I am in the body, I

may make it my constant study and chief aim to glorify Thy name, both with soul and body, which are no longer mine, but Thine. For I am “bought with a price”—not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Enable me to let my light so shine, that others, seeing my good works, may be led to glorify Thy name. O! make use of me as a humble instrument of advancing Thy kingdom on earth and promoting the salvation of immortal souls. If Thou hast appointed sufferings for me here below, I beseech Thee to consider my weakness and let Thy chastisements be those of a loving father that I may be made partaker of Thy holiness. And let me not be tempted above what I am able to bear, but with the temptation make a way for escape.

O most merciful God! cast me not off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength declineth. Now, when I am old and gray-haired, let Thy grace be sufficient for me and enable me to bring forth fruit, even in old age. May my hoary head be found in the ways of righteousness. Preserve my mind from dotage and imbecility, and my body from protracted disease and excruciating pain. Deliver me from despondency and discouragement in my declining years, and enable me to bear afflictions with patience, fortitude, and perfect submission to Thy holy will. Lift upon me perpetually the light of Thy reconciled countenance and cause me to rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the hope of Thy glory. May the peace that passeth all understanding be constantly diffused through my soul, so that my mind may remain calm through all the storms and vicissitudes of life.

As, in the course of nature, I must be drawing near to my end, and as I know I must soon put off this tabernacle, I do humbly and earnestly beseech Thee, O Father of mercies, to prepare me for this inevitable and solemn event. Fortify my mind against the terrors of death. Give me, if it please Thee, an easy passage through the gate of death. Dissipate the dark clouds and mists which naturally hand over the grace and lead me gently down into the gloomy valley. O my kind Shepherd, who has tasted the bitterness of death for me and who knowest how to sympathize with and succour the sheep of Thy pasture, be Thou present to guide, to support, and to comfort me. Illumine with beams of heavenly light the valley and shadow of death, so that I may fear no evil. When heart and flesh fail, be Thou the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Let not my courage fail in the trying hour. Permit not the great adversary to harass my soul in the last struggle, but make me a conqueror and more than a conqueror in that fearful conflict. I humbly ask that my reason may be continued to the last, and if it be Thy will, that I may be so comforted and supported, I may leave a testimony in favor of the reality of religion, and Thy faithfulness in fulfilling Thy gracious promises, and that others of Thy servants, who may follow after, may be encouraged by my example to commit themselves boldly to the guidance and keeping of the Shepherd of Israel. And when my spirit leaves this clay tenement, Lord Jesus, receive it. Send some of the blessed angels to convoy my inexperienced soul to the mansion which Thy love has prepared. And O! let me be so situated, though in the lowest rank, that I may behold Thy glory. May I have an abundant entrance administered unto me into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for whose sake and in whose name, I ask all these things. Amen. (A. Alexander, 1844).

A PRAYER

Reveal, blessed Jesus! reveal Thy glory to mine eyes and shed abroad Thy love in my heart. Cause me to rest completely satisfied in Thy undertaking as the fulfilling-end of the law, and enable me to live upon Thy inexhaustible fulness. Empty me of all self-dependence and make me truly humble. Show me the beauty of holiness as delineated in Thy most perfect pattern, and help me to copy it in my own conduct. Raise my affections to heavenly things and grant me the abiding earnest of my eternal inheritance. Then, though in a sinful world and a militant state—though harassed with bodily pain or pinched with worldly poverty, I shall not only be safe, but happy. The slavish fears of damnation shall be far distant and the beams of celestial joy shall shine into my soul. Then, ye sons of sensuality and children of pride, ye may take your sordid pleasures and boast of your tinsel honours. I shall neither covet your lawless mirth, nor envy your sounding titles. Being dead to the law and alive to my God, being safe in the hands of my Saviour and blest with a sense of His love, having death in remembrance and heaven in view, I shall despise your mean pursuits and abhor your illicit enjoyments. While the world is satisfied with the feather of fading honours and the froth of perishing pleasures, be it thy concern O my soul to glorify Him who died for thee and rose again. Then shall substantial pleasures be thy present enjoyment and unfading honours thy eternal crown. (Abraham Booth, 1734-1806).

