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# **STUDIES**

## **IN THE**

# **SCRIPTURES**

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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

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# STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### *19. The Spirit Enlightening (Part 1)*

By nature, fallen man is in a state of darkness with respect unto God. Be he never so wise, learned and skillful in natural things, unto spiritual things he is blind. Not until we are renewed in the spirit of our minds by the Holy Spirit can we see things in God's light. But this is something which the world cannot endure to hear of and when it be insisted upon, they will hotly deny the same. So did the Pharisees of Christ's day angrily ask, with pride and scorn, “Are we blind also?” (Joh 9:40), to which our Lord replied by affirming that their presumption of spiritual light and knowledge only aggravated their sin and condemnation (Joh 9:41). Unhesitatingly He told the blind leaders of religion that, notwithstanding all their boasting, they had never heard the Father's voice “at any time” (Joh 5:37).

There is a twofold spiritual darkness, outward and inward. The former is the case with those who are without the Gospel, until God sends the external means of grace to them, “The people which sat in darkness saw great light” (Mat 4:16). The latter is the case with all until God the Spirit performs a miracle of grace within the soul and quickens the dead into newness of life, “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness *comprehended it not*” (Joh 1:5). No matter how well we be acquainted with the letter of Scripture, no matter how sound and faithful be the preaching we sit under, and the books we read, until the soul be divinely quickened, it has *no* spiritual discernment or experimental perception of divine things. Until a man be born again, he *cannot* “see” the kingdom of God (Joh 3:3).

This inward darkness which fills the soul of the natural man is something far more dreadful than a mere intellectual ignorance of spiritual things. Ignorance is a negative thing, but this spiritual “darkness” is a positive thing—an energetic principle which is

opposed to God. The “darkness” which rests upon the human soul gives the heart a bias toward evil, prejudicing it against holiness, fettering the will so that it never moves Godward. Hence we read of “the *power* of darkness” (Col 1:13). So great is its power that all under it *love* darkness “rather than light” (Joh 3:19). Why is it that men have little difficulty in learning a business and are quick to discover how to make money and gratify their lusts, but are stupid and unteachable in the things of God? Why is it that men are so prone and ready to believe religious lies and so averse to the truth? None but the Spirit can deliver from this terrible darkness. Unless the Sun of righteousness arises upon us (Mal 4:2), we are shut up in “the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13).

Because of the darkness which rests upon and reigns within his entire soul, the natural man can neither know, admire, love, or serve the true God in a spiritual way. How can God appear infinitely lovely to one whose every bias of his heart prompts unto hatred of the divine perfections? How can a corrupt soul be charmed with a character which is the absolute opposite of its own? What fellowship can there be between darkness and light; what concord can there be between sin and holiness; what agreement between a carnal mind and Him against whom it is enmity? *False* notions of God may charm even an unregenerate heart, but none save a divinely-quicken soul can spiritually know and love God. The true God can never appear as an infinitely amiable and lovely Being to one who is dead in trespasses and sins, and completely under the dominion of the devil.

“It is true that many a carnal man is ravished to think that God loves him and will save him, but in this case, it is not the true character of God which charms the heart. It is not *God* that is loved. Strictly speaking, he can only love himself and self-love is the source of all his affections. Or if we call it ‘love’ to God, it is of no other kind than sinners feel to one another, ‘For sinners also love those that love them’ (Luk 6:32). The carnal Israelites gave the fullest proof of their disaffection to the divine character (in the wilderness), as exhibited by God Himself before their eyes, yet were once full of this same kind of ‘love’ at the side of the Red Sea” (Joseph Bellamy, 1719-1790).

My reader, the mere fact that your heart is thrilled with a belief *that God loves you*, is no proof whatever that God’s *true* character would suit your taste had you right notions of it. The Galatians loved Paul while they considered him as the instrument of their conversion, but on further acquaintance with him, they turned his enemies, for his character, rightly understood, was not at all congenial to them. If God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” and cannot but look upon sin with infinite detestation (Hab 1:13), if all those imaginations, affections, and actions which are so sweet to the taste of a carnal heart are so infinitely odious in the eyes of God as to appear to Him worthy of the eternal pains of hell, then it is utterly impossible for a carnal heart to see any beauty in the divine character until it perceives its *own* character to be infinitely odious.

*There is no spiritual love for the true God until self be hated.* The one necessarily implies the other. I cannot look upon God as a lovely Being, without looking upon myself as infinitely vile and hateful. When Christ said to the Pharisees, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Mat 23:33), those words determined *His* character in their eyes and it implies a contradiction to suppose that Christ’s character might appear lovely to them, *without* their own appearing odious,

answerable to the import of His words. There was nothing in the Pharisees' hearts to look upon their *own* character in such a detestable light and therefore all the Saviour's words and works could only exasperate them. The more they knew of Christ, the more they hated Him, as it was natural to approve of their own character, so it was natural to condemn His.

The Pharisees were completely under the power of "darkness" and so is every human being till the Spirit quickens him into newness of life. If the fault was not in the Pharisees, it must have been in Christ, and for them to own it was *not* in Christ, was to acknowledge they *were* "vipers" and worthy of eternal destruction. They could not look upon Him as *lovely*, until they looked upon themselves as *infinitely odious*, but *that* was diametrically opposite to every bias of their hearts. Their old hearts, therefore, *must* be taken away and a new heart be given them, or they would never view things in a true light. "Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God" (Joh 3:3).

"Darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen 1:2)—fallen man's state by nature. "And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2)—adumbrating His initial work of quickening. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen 1:3). Natural light was the first thing produced in the making of the world and spiritual light is the first thing given at the new creation, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Co 4:6). This divine light shining into the mind, occasions *new apprehensions* of what is presented before it. Hitherto the favoured subject of it had heard much about Christ, "By the hearing of the ear," but *now* his eye *seeth* him (Job 42:5). He clearly apprehends a transcendent excellency in Him, an extreme necessity of Him, a complete sufficiency in Him.

"In thy light shall we see light" (Psa 36:9). This is what spiritual illumination consists of. It is not a mere informing of the mind or communication of intellectual knowledge, but an experimental and efficacious consciousness of the reality and nature of divine and spiritual things. It is capacitating the mind to see sin in its real hideousness and heinousness, and to perceive "the *beauty* of holiness" (Psa 96:9) so as to fall heartily in love with it. It is a spiritual light superadded to all the innate conceptions of the human mind, which is so pure and elevated that it is entirely beyond the power of the natural man to reach unto. It is something which the natural heart cannot even conceive of, but the knowledge of which is communicated by the Spirit's enlightenment (1Co 2:9-10).

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 79. *The Achievements of Faith (11:33-34)*

True faith performs a prominent part in all experimental godliness. Where there is a total absence of the grace of faith, a man is without God and without hope in this world. But where that spiritual principle exists, if only in the very small degree, there has taken place a wondrous and miraculous change. The one who is the subject of it may not, for a

time, understand its nature, but instead, make the greatest mistakes about it. Nevertheless, that change is no less than one of passing from death unto life. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed" (Mat 17:20), that little grain has a principle of *life* in it and contains in embryo the future plant. So with the implanting of the principle of grace in the heart—it will yet develop into, or rather be consummated, in glory.

It behooves each one of us to take diligent pains in ascertaining the *origin* of our faith. There are various kinds of faith spoken of in the Scriptures—there is a dead faith, a demon's faith, a fancied and forced faith, a creature and presumptuous faith—all of which are to be dreaded, for they come not from above. But spiritual faith is *divine* in its origin, "It is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). True faith is no offspring of nature, but has a celestial birth, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is *from above*, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (Jam 1:17). Spiritual faith is the heart's persuasion of the truth of God and is produced in us by the almighty creative power of the Holy Spirit when He applies the Word in life-giving energy to the soul.

Now this faith is not only divinely-communicated, but it is divinely-sustained. Spiritual faith is neither self-sustained nor man-sustained. It does not support itself, nor does its possessor support it. It depends entirely upon God. Alas, alas the "faith" of the vast majority of professing Christians, instead of being of this *self-helpless* nature, fills them with a deceiving self-ability. Nothing is so dependent upon God in Christ, nothing so utterly unable to live without the Spirit's supporting power, as that faith which He Himself produces in the heart. But the "faith" of multitudes today is of a totally different nature, and we might accommodate and apply to them those words of Paul's, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings" (1Co 4:8)—but *without* the Spirit.

This faith is not only divinely-given and divinely-sustained, but it is also divinely-energized. It acts only by the quickening power of God. "Without me," said Christ, "ye can do *nothing*" (Joh 15:5). Then, certainly, without *His* enablement, we cannot act faith upon Himself or His promises. But a spurious faith, springing up out of mere nature, self-made and self-supporting, is also a self-acting one. The possessors of it can believe when they like, as they like, and what they like. There is Christ, *they* can lay hold of Him. There are His promises, *they* can appropriate them. There are His offices, *they* can act faith upon them. Alas, such ability savours nothing of the faith which God gives to His people and which causes them to lie at the footstool of His mercy as humble supplicants.

This faith is also *divinely-increased*, "*Lord, increase our faith*" (Luk 17:5). But let it be pointed out that such an "increase" does not render the Christian less dependent upon the Spirit of God—that would be a miserable increase—like the prodigal son getting his portion of goods and setting up for himself. Nor is it such an increase that now remains at one level, always acting with a certain power, always in the same lively exercise. Far from it. Real Christians know from painful experience how often *their* faith is at a low ebb, and when apparently the most needed, is the worst crippled in its actings. Nor is it such an increase that its possessors should necessarily be conscious of it. Moses knew not that his face shone. Most probably the centurion and the Canaanitish woman little thought that they had "great faith." Sometimes those who have the most faith feel they have very little, if any at all. While sometimes those who have little, say they are rich and increased with goods.

In what, then, does an increase of faith consist? Is it not the Christian's growth, *as a believer*, a growth in a true, living, spiritual, experimental knowledge of himself as a sinner, and of God in Christ as the Father of mercies? Faith is fed by knowledge—not by mere notions in the brain, for those only feed a false and presumptuous confidence, but by a spiritual and divine knowledge. As *this* knowledge increases, faith increases. As this knowledge is confirmed in the soul, faith is confirmed and strengthened. "Blessed is the man whom thou *chastenest*, O LORD, and *teachest* him out of thy law" (Psa 94:12). Again, "He *led* him about, he *instructed* him" (Deu 32:10). God leads into a great variety of circumstances and in these circumstances He causes His people to receive instruction. In that way they learn the truth in an *experimental* manner, and what they receive from the Word is confirmed more and more unto them. In that way they learn the vanity of the world, the fickleness of the creature, the depravity of their own hearts.

Now this divinely-given and divinely-supported faith is renewed or stirred into exercise by the operations of the Holy Spirit, and brings forth fruit "after its own kind," that is, fruit which is spiritual in its nature and supernatural in its character. In other words, faith is an active principle—it "*worketh* by love" (Gal 5:6). As it is energized by its Giver, it produces that which mere human nature is utterly incapable of producing. An unmistakable proof of this is seen in our present verses, where we read, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Heb 11:33-34).

There are two ways in which the remarkable contents of these verses may be considered—according as we look at their letter in a natural way or according as we ponder them with an anointed eye. Water will not rise above its own level. The heart of the natural man, being a stranger to spiritual things, cannot discern them when they are spread before him—that is why the majority of the commentaries are so largely devoted to the historical, grammatical, and geographical details of Scripture. There *is* an historical allusion in each clause of our text, but what the true Christian desires is to know the spiritual purport and the practical application of them unto himself. Only thus do the Scriptures become a *living* Word unto him. This is what we have sought to keep steadily in mind as we have passed from verse to verse of Hebrews 11 and which we will endeavor to be occupied with now.

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms" (Heb 11:33-34). The opening word takes us back to the list of worthies mentioned in the preceding verse, and here we are supplied with an enumeration of some of the wonderful works performed by them. Nine fruits of their faith are mentioned—compare the ninefold "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22-23. Therein we behold once more the marvelous and miraculous efficacy of a spiritual faith. "These instances are taken from things of all sorts to show that there is nothing of any kind whatever wherein we may be concerned but that faith will be useful and helpful" (John Owen, 1616-1683). No matter what our lot may be—"pleasing or painful," no matter what station we are called to fill—high or low, no matter how formidable or difficult the obstacles which confront us, "*all* things are possible to him that believeth" (Mar 9:23).

“Through faith subdued kingdoms” (Heb 11:33-34). The word here for “subdue” means “to fight or contend, to enter into a trial of strength, of courage on the field, to prevail in battle.” The historical allusion is to the exploits of Joshua and David. “Joshua subdued the kingdoms in Canaan, and David subdued those which were around that country, such as Moab, Ammon and Syria; and they both subdued these kingdoms through believing” (John Brown, 1784-1858). The important point to recognize is that the “kingdoms” here “subdued” were those which sought to prevent the people of God (Israel) from entering into and enjoying their rightful inheritance. Now let us spiritualize that fact. The Christian has been begotten “to an inheritance” (1Pe 1:3-4), that “inheritance” is to be enjoyed *now*, by faith, for “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). But there are powerful enemies seeking to harass and hinder us, and they must be “subdued.”

There are two principal “kingdoms” which the Christian is called upon to “subdue,” one is within himself, the other without him—the “flesh” and the “world.” It was to the former of these that the apostle had reference when he said, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1Co 9:27). The same task is set before the Christian, “For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19). The “flesh” or sinful nature within us *must be* “subdued,” or it will certainly slay us—bring about our eternal undoing, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13).

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city” (Pro 16:32). Does the reader exclaim, Such a task is a hopeless one! Joshua might have said the same when he first set foot in Canaan, and found it occupied with a powerful and hostile people. And, my reader, Joshua did not “subdue” them in a day, nor in a year! No, it was accomplished little by little. It meant fierce fighting, it meant the exercise of much courage and patience, it meant surmounting varied discouragements, but at the end, God crowned his labors with success. And remember that it was *by faith* he “subdued kingdoms.” Ah, faith looks to God and draws vigor and strength from Him. True, I *am* weak and impatient in myself, yet “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:13).

There is also a “kingdom” without, which the Christian must “subdue,” or else he will be destroyed by it, “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (Jam 4:4). And *how* is the “world” to be “subdued?” 1 John 5:4 gives us the answer, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even *our faith*.” Sweetly is this signified in the Song of Solomon, “Who is this that *cometh up from the wilderness?*” (Song 8:5). Here the child of God, though toiling and struggling, worn and weary, is represented as rising above the world. And *how* is this accomplished? How is it that the spouse of Christ is enabled to rise above the immense hindrance of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”—those things which are “in the world” (1Jo 2:16)? She is seen “*leaning upon her beloved*” (Song 8:5). As He is our object, the world loses its power over us, as He is our strength, we get the victory over it.



“Wrought righteousness” (Heb 11:33). In their narrower sense, these words signify “to execute judgment, to enforce the laws of justice,” the historical reference would then be to such passages as Joshua 11:10-15, 1 Samuel 24:10, 2 Samuel 8:15. But in its wider scope, “wrought righteousness” means the living of a holy life, “LORD, WHO shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Psa 15:1-2). “In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Act 10:35). “Righteousness” signifies up to the required standard, and to work righteousness means walking according to the rule of God’s Word, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat 7:12).

Now right actions must spring from right principles and must be performed with right ends, if they are to be acceptable to God. In other words, they must issue from a living faith and have in view the glory of God. It is the absence of *faith* and the substituting of *self-interest*, for the honor of the Lord, which is the cause of all the injustice and oppression in the world today. But let it now be carefully noted that “subdued kingdoms” *precedes* “wrought righteousness.” This order is unchanging—evil must be hated before good can be loved (Amo 5:15), self must be denied before Christ can be followed (Mat 16:24), the old man must be put off before the new man can be put on (Eph 4:22-24). In other words, the “flesh” must be mortified before the “spirit” can be manifested.

“Obtained promises” (Heb 11:33), or secured the blessings promised. God assured Joshua that he should conquer Canaan, Gideon that he should defeat the Midianites, David that he should be king over all Israel. But outwardly, tremendous difficulties stood in the way of the accomplishment of those things, yea, apparent impossibilities prevented them. Gideon was put upon a great improbability when he was commanded to take but three hundred men, fall upon and destroy an immense host. David and his little company seemed to be no match for the armed forces of Saul, and after his death, for years the throne seemed as far away as ever. But where there is a real trust in the living God, the most formidable difficulties may be overcome.

“Obtained promises” (Heb 11:33). Ah, it is one thing to hear and read about the wonderful things which the faith of *others* secures, but what about your *own* experience, dear reader? You may sincerely think that you believe in and are resting upon the sure promises of God, but are you obtaining a *fulfillment* of them in your own daily life? Are the blessings set forth in the promises actually in your possession? Are you securing the things promised? If not, is the reason to be found in your failure to heed what here *precedes*? *Before* “obtained promises” comes “subdued kingdoms” and then “wrought righteousness.” We must not expect to “obtain” the precious things set before us in the promises until we definitely and diligently set about the subjugation of the flesh, and *walk* according to the rules of God’s Word—regulating our conduct by its precepts and commands.

“Stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb 11:33). The historical reference is, of course, to Daniel in the den. It shows again the marvelous power of faith. This comes out clearly in Daniel 6:23, “So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found

upon him, *because he believed* in his God.” But how far may this be of help to us? Is the answer far to seek, there are ferocious people, as well as fierce animals! There are savage oppressors and persecutors who seek to intimidate, if not destroy, the mild and harmless Christian. True, yet they should not terrify us, still less spoil our testimony, by causing us to hide our light under a bushel. Daniel would not be forced into compromising by the threat of the lions of Babylon, nor should we be by the menacing looks, words, and actions of the world’s lions today. Say with one of old, “I will trust, and not be afraid” (Isa 12:2).

“Stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb 11:33). Why it almost looks as though faith were omnipotent? What cannot real faith do! We dare not set any limitations to it, for faith has to do with the living God, and nothings is too hard for Him. Ah, dear reader, faith lays hold of *the Almighty* and not until your faith learns to do that is it of much worth. Is the Lord God a living reality to you or do you have but a theological knowledge of Him? The ultimate reference in our text is to him of whom it is said, “The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8). His mouth is opened against many a child of God, uttering lies, telling him that his profession is an empty one. Have you learned to “stop his mouth?” Do his false accusations no longer terrify you? Does he now find it useless to thus harass you any longer? It all depends, “stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb 11:33), is preceded by “obtained *promises*”!

“Quenched the violence of fire” (Heb 11:34). The historical allusion is to the three Hebrews in Babylon’s furnace. It shows the efficacy of faith to rest upon the power of God in the face of great danger, yea, before what seemed to be certain death. Those three Hebrews resolved to perform their duty, no matter what the event, committing themselves unto the disposition of a sovereign God. With full persuasion of His power to do whatever He pleased and which would be most for his glory. Such an exercise of faith appears very, very marvelous to us. Ah, let it be fully borne in mind that Daniel and his fellows trusted God in times of peace and prosperity, as well as in seasons of peril and adversity. If we live by faith, it will not be difficult to die by faith.

“Quenched the violence of fire” (Heb 11:34). A twofold spiritual application may be made of these words. First, we read of “the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph 6:16), and these are to be “quenched” by “taking the shield of faith.” If we are subduing kingdoms, working righteousness, and obtaining promises, neither the mouth of the lion will be able to intimidate us, nor *the temptations* of the devil overcome us. Second, we read of faith which is “tried with fire” (1Pe 1:7) or fierce afflictions—this fire (like Babylon’s) is *not* “put out,” but its “violence” or *power to injure* is “quenched.” If the soul cleaves to God, naught can harm it. It is faith, and not water, which quenches the fire—behold the martyrs *singing* amid the flames!

“Escaped the edge of the sword” (Heb 11:34). The historical reference is to such passages as 1 Samuel 18:4, 1 Kings 18:10; 19:1-3, Jeremiah 39:15-18, in several of which it seems as though those eminent servants of God escaped from danger more by fear than by faith—by *fleeing* from those who threatened their lives. The life of faith is many-sided and care needs to be taken to preserve the balance—to keep from mere passivity on the one hand and from fanatical presumption on the other. While the Christian is to walk by faith, yet there is wrestling (Eph 6:12) and fighting to be done (1Ti 6:12). We are to seek grace

and develop all heroic virtues, such as courage, valor, hardness (2Ti 2:3), and endeavor by divine aid to overcome everything which hinders us entering into God's best. On the other side, the Christian must not refuse the use and aid of all lawful means in times of danger, "When they persecute you in this city, *flee ye* into another" (Mat 10:23)—to refuse to do so is not faith, but presumption.

"Escaped the edge of the sword" (Heb 11:34). What is the deeper meaning of this? Our minds at once turn to Hebrews 4:12, "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword." Confirmation of this is found in the fact that the Greek of our text reads "Escaped the *edges* of the sword" (Heb 11:34). But *how* is the Christian to "escape" the edges of the Spirit's Sword? By being in practical subjection to the precepts of Scripture, walking in communion with God. It is when we get into a backslidden state and give way to the lusts of the flesh that the Word condemns our ways, pierces our conscience, and strikes terror to our hearts. God does not wound or afflict "willingly" (Lam 3:33), but only when our conduct is displeasing to Him. If our hearts be right with God, His Word will strengthen and comfort, rather than cut and wound us. If we *judge* ourselves for all that is wrong, the Sword will not smite us—when we fail to, the Word searches and convicts us. Note Revelation 19:15, where the same figure of the "sharp sword" is seen in Christ's mouth as He comes forth to destroy His enemies!

"Out of weakness were made strong" (Heb 11:34). In those words, there may be a latent reference to Samson in the closing scene of his life, but most probably the historical allusion is unto Hezekiah. In 2 Kings 20:1, we are told that Hezekiah was "sick unto death," and then he prayed unto the Lord, which was in marked contrast from Ahaziah (2Ki 1:2), and Asa (2Ch 16:12). 2 Kings 20:3, "I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore" is much misunderstood. The key to it is found in 1 Kings 2:4, "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) *a man on the throne of Israel.*" Hezekiah was conscious of his integrity and sincere desire to please God, but he had no son to succeed him to the throne, and therefore did he here call to mind His promise. The Lord responded to his faith, restored him to health, added fifteen years to his life and gave him a son.

"Out of weakness were made strong" (Heb 11:34). It is not simply that "the weak were strengthened," but "out of *weakness* were made strong," the emphasis being upon an extremity of feebleness. It shows us that the vigor of faith is not dependent upon health of the body! It is written "The prayer of faith shall [not the "anointing" of the "elders"] save the sick" (Jam 5:15 and cf. Phi 2:27). But our text is not to be restricted to physical "weakness." God is able to make the doctrinally and spiritually weak to stand, Romans 14:4. The secret of the Christian's strength lies in maintaining a consciousness of his weakness (2Co 12:10). The trouble is that as we grow older, most of us grow more independent and self-sufficient. The fact is that the oldest Christian has no more strength *in himself* than he had when he was but a "babe in Christ." Just so soon as we fail to feel and acknowledge before God our personal weakness, do we fail to prove the sufficiency of God's grace! Seek strength from Him daily.

“Waxed valiant in fight” (Heb 11:34). Probably the reference is to Samson (Jdg 15:15) and David. The phrase signifies that these heroes of faith refused to be intimidated by the might and number of their enemies. Undaunted by the great odds against them, they refused to give way to a spirit of cowardice and entered into a pitched battle against their foes, compare Deuteronomy 31:23, Joshua 1:7, Psalms 3:6, Acts 4:29. Once again we would stress the importance of the *order* here, “waxed valiant in fight” is preceded by “out of weakness were made strong”! and that in turn by “escaped the *edge* of the sword”! May we not easily perceive here why it is that we are so quickly and so frequently overcome by our spiritual foes?

“Turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb 11:34). Such passages as Joshua 10:1-10 and 2 Samuel 5:17-25 may be consulted for typical illustrations of what is here in view, carefully bearing in mind that while the power of God giving success to the efforts of Joshua and David was the efficient cause of their victories, yet instrumentally, it was “through faith” they were wrought. The path of faith is one of conflict because the adversary contests every step of the way. The chief reason why the individual Christian experiences so little victory in his spiritual warfare is because his *faith* is so little in exercise. And we may add, the chief reason why the Church collectively is failing so lamentably to “turn to fight the armies of the aliens” is because there is so much jealousy and strife among its own members!

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### 31. *His Testing*

It is a wonderful thing when a wayward believer is brought back to the place of fellowship with God, as David had been, though it necessarily involves added obligations. It is *sin* which causes us to leave that place, and though at first sin be a sweet morsel unto the flesh, yet it soon turns bitter, and ultimately becomes as wormwood and gall unto him who has yielded to it. “The way of transgressors is hard” (Pro 13:15). The wicked prove the full truth of that fact in the next world, where they discover that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23)—a death agonizing in its nature and eternal in its duration. But even in this life the transgressor is usually made to feel the hardness of that way which his own mad self-will has chosen, and especially is this the case with the believer, for the harvest of *his* ill sowings is reaped—mainly, at least—in this world. The Christian, equally with the non-Christian, is a subject under the government of God, and *doubly* is *he* made to realize that God cannot be mocked with impunity.

Strikingly and solemnly was this fact exemplified in the history of Israel during Old Testament times. *This* principle supplies the key to all God’s governmental dealings with them. The history of no nation has been nearly so checkered as *theirs*. No people was ever so sorely and so frequently afflicted as the favoured descendants of Jacob. From the death of Joshua unto the days of Malachi, we find one judgment after another sent from God

upon them. Famines, pestilence, earthquakes, internal dissensions, and external assaults from the surrounding nations followed each other in rapid succession, and were *repeated* again and again. There were brief respites, short seasons of peace and prosperity, but for the most part, it was one sore trouble after another. God did not deal *thus* with any other nation during the Mosaic economy. It is true that heathen empires suffered, and ultimately collapsed under the weight of their lasciviousness, but in the main God “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Act 14:16), and “the times of this ignorance God winked at” (Act 17:30).

Far otherwise was it with His own covenant people. This has surprised many, yet it should not. Unto Israel God said, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” Yes, and that has been commonly recognized by readers of the Old Testament, but what immediately follows has very largely been lost sight of—“*therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amo 3:2). Ah, it was *not*, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore* will I *wink at* your sins, excuse *your* faults, and pass over your transgressions.” No, no, far from it. It was unto Israel that God had revealed Himself, it was “in Judah he was known,” and therefore would He manifest before their hearts and eyes His ineffable holiness and inflexible justice. Where they were loose and lax, despising God’s authority, and recklessly and brazenly breaking His laws, he would *vindicate His honour* by making it appear how much He hated sin, and hates it most of all in those who are *nearest* to Him! See Ezekiel 9:6!

That is why another of Israel’s prophets announced unto those who had, under a temporal covenant, been taken into a bridal relation to Jehovah, “she hath received of the LORD’S hand *double* for all *her* sins” (Isa 40:2). Does that strike the reader as strange? But why should it? Are not the sins of the professing people of God *doubly heinous* to those committed by them who make no profession at all? What comparison was there between the sins of the nation of Israel and the sins of the heathen who were without the knowledge of the true God? The sins of the former were sins *against light*, against an open and written revelation from heaven, against the abounding goodness and amazing grace of God toward them, and therefore must He, in His holiness and righteousness, make the severest example *of them*. Make no mistake upon that point, God will either be sanctified *by* or *upon* those who have been taken unto a place of (even outward) nearness to Himself, see Leviticus 10:3.

Thus, Amos 3:3 becomes *a prophecy* of God’s dealings with Christendom. The great difference which existed between the nation of Israel and the Gentiles finds its parallel in this era between Christendom (the sphere where Christianity is professedly acknowledged) and the heathen world. But with this additional most solemn consideration, increased privileges necessarily entail increased responsibilities. Under this Christian era a far higher and grander revelation of God has been made in and through and by the Lord Jesus Christ, than ever the *nation* of Israel had in Old Testament times. If then Israel’s *despising* of God in His inferior revelation was followed by such awful consequences to the temporal welfare of their people under the old covenant, what *must be* the consequences of the *despising* of God in His highest revelation under the new covenant? “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, *much more* shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb 12:25).

But what has all the above to do with the life of David? Much every way. God dealt with individual saints who had been taken into spiritual nearness to Himself on the same principles, governmentally, (that is, in the ordering of their temporal affairs), as He treated with the nation as a whole, which enjoined only outward nearness to Himself. Hence, *as* David sowed in his conduct, *so* he reaped in his circumstances. As we have seen in the last few articles, God had acted in marvelous grace with the son of Jesse, and following his repentance and putting things right with the Lord, had unmistakably shown Himself strong on his behalf, ending by bringing him to "Hebron" which speaks of fellowship. Thus David has now reached the point where God said to him, as it were, "Sin no more, *lest a worse thing come unto thee*" (Joh 5:14).

Should it be asked, "But what has all of this to do with us? *we* are living in the 'Dispensation of grace,' and God deals with people now—both nations collectively, and saints individually—very differently from what He did in Old Testament times." That is a great mistake—a glaring, and a horrible one. Glaring it certainly is, for Romans 15:4 expressly states, "Whatsoever things were written *aforetime* were written for our learning," but what *could* we "learn" from the ways of God with His people of old if He is now acting from entirely different principles? Nothing whatever, in fact, in that case, the less we read the Old Testament, the less we are likely to be confused. Ah, my reader, in the New Testament also we read that "judgment must begin *at the house of God*" (1Pe 4:17). *Christians* are also warned, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7). Horrible too is such a mistake, for it represents the immutable God *changing* the principles of His government.

What has been pointed out in the above paragraphs is something more than an interesting and instructive item of historical information, explaining much that is to be met with in the Old Testament Scriptures, throwing light upon God's dealings with the nation of Israel collectively and with its prominent men individually. It is also of vital moment *for Christians today*. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation" of God's "throne" (Psa 97:2), and *our* temporal affairs are regulated and determined according to the same principles of God's moral government as were those of His people in bygone ages. If the distinguishing favours of God do not restrain from sin, they most certainly will not exempt us from divine chastisement. Nay, the greater the divine privileges enjoyed by us, the nearer we are brought unto God in a way of profession and favour, the more quickly will He notice our inconsistencies and the more severely will He deal with our sins.

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much *sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb 10:28-29). Here is a statement of the broad principle which we have been seeking to explicate and illustrate. True, in this particular passage the application of it is made unto apostates, but the fact is plainly enough revealed that the greater the privileges enjoyed, the greater the obligations entailed, and the greater the guilt incurred when those obligations are ignored. The same principle applies (though the consequences are different) in the contrast between the sins of the Christian and the non-Christian. The sins of the former are more

heinous than those of the latter. How so? Because God is far more dishonoured by the sins of those who bear His name than by those who make no profession at all.

The same principle, as it applies to gradation by contrast, holds good of the individual Christian in different stages of his own life. The more light God gives him, the more practical godliness He requires from him. The more favours he receives and privileges he enjoys, the more responsible is he to bear increased fruit. So too a sin committed by him may receive comparatively light chastisement, but let it be repeated and he may expect the rod to fall more heavily upon him. In like manner, God may bear long with one of His backslidden children, and though the path of recovery be a thorny one, yet will he exclaim, "I richly deserved far severer treatment." But when the backslider has been restored and brought back into communion with God, another departure from Him is likely to be attended with far worse consequences than the former one was.

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be *feared*" (Psa 130:4). Yes, "feared," not trifled with, not that we may the more confidently give free rein to our lusts. A true apprehension of the divine mercy will not embolden unto sin, but will deepen our hatred of it and make us more earnest in striving to abstain from it. A spiritual apprehension of God's abounding grace toward us, so far from begetting carelessness, produces increased carefulness, lest we displease One so kind and good. It is just because the Christian has been sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption, that he is exhorted to watchfulness lest he "grieve" Him. The more the heart truly appreciates the infinitude of God's wondrous love unto us, the more will its language be, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!" (Gen 39:9).

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be *feared*" (Psa 130:4). Not a slavish and servile fear, but the fear of the Lord which is "the beginning of wisdom," that fear which reverences, loves, worships, serves and obeys Him. Genuine gratitude of God's pardoning grace will move the soul unto suitable filial conduct. It works a fear of being carried away from the heavens of His conscious presence by the insidious current of worldliness. It is jealous lest anything be allowed that would mar our communion with the Lover of our souls. Where the pardoning mercy of God is thankfully esteemed by the soul, it calls to mind the fearful price which was paid by Christ so that God could righteously forgive His erring people, and *that* consideration melts the heart and moves to loving obedience.

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be *feared*" (Psa 130:4). Yes, once more we say "feared," and not "trifled with." The word unto backsliders, who have been pardoned and graciously restored to fellowship with God, is, "Let them not *turn again* to folly" (Psa 85:8), that is, let them beware of any cooling of their affections, and slipping back into their old ways. Let them pray earnestly and strive resolutely against a sinful trading with God's mercy and a turning of His grace into lasciviousness. We serve a jealous God, and must needs therefore be incessantly vigilant against sin. If we are not, if we do "return again to folly," then most surely will His rod fall more heavily upon us, and not only will our inward peace be disturbed, but our outward circumstances will be made to sorely trouble us.

That principle was plainly enunciated in the threats which the Lord made unto Israel of old, "And if ye will not be reformed by me by *these* things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you *yet seven times* for your sins" (Lev 26:23-24). If the first sensible tokens of God's displeasure do not attain their end in the humbling of ourselves beneath His mighty hand and the reforming of our ways, if His lesser judgments do not lead to this, then He will surely send sorer judgments upon us. Ezra recognized this principle when, after the remnant had come out of Babylon, he said, "And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; Should we *again* break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?" (Ezr 9:13-14). Then let *us* beware of trifling with God, particularly so after He has recovered us from a season of backsliding.

Instead of taking up the details of 2 Samuel 2:9-32 (the passage which immediately follows the verses considered in the preceding article), we felt this topical one would prove much more helpful in paving the way for those which are (D.V.) to follow. Those verses record an encounter between the rival factions. The gauntlet was thrown down by Abner, the general of the followers of Ishbosheth (Saul's son), and the challenge was accepted by Joab, who headed the military forces of David. Neither side brought their full army into the field and the slaughter was but small (v. 30). The men of Abner, the aggressor, were routed, and at the close of the day their captain begged for peace (v. 26). Knowing the pacific intentions of David, and his loathness to make war upon the house of Saul, Joab generously called a halt (v. 28) and each side made their way homeward (vv. 29-32).

And now a word upon the title we have given to this article, and we must close. David was now located at Hebron, which signifies communion or fellowship. The men of Judah had made him their king (2Sa 2:4), which though a step toward it, was by no means the complete fulfillment of the promise that he should be king "over *Israel*" (1Sa 16:1, 3). David made kindly overtures unto "the men of Jabesh-gilead," the followers of the late Saul (2Sa 2:5), expressing the hope they would now show fealty to him (v. 7). Would the Lord continue showing Himself strong on his behalf by turning the hearts of the rival faction toward him? The need for this was evident (vv. 7-10), yet it was easy for God to heal that breach and give David favour in the eyes of all. Would He do so? How far will the present conduct of David warrant this? for God will not place a premium on sin. David is now *put to the test*: how he acquitted himself we must leave for the next article.



# THE DIVINE COVENANTS

## *1. Introduction*

The Covenants occupy no subordinate place on the pages of divine revelation as even a superficial perusal of the Scriptures will serve to show. The word "covenant" is found no fewer than twenty-five times in the very first book of the Bible, and occurs again scores of times in the remaining books of the Pentateuch, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets. Nor is it inconspicuous in the New Testament. When instituting the great memorial of His death, the Saviour said, "This cup is the *new testament* in my blood" (Luk 22:20). When enumerating the special blessings which God had conferred upon the Israelites, Paul declared that unto them belonged "the covenants" (Rom 9:4). To the Galatians he expounded "the two covenants" (Gal 4:24-31). The Ephesian saints were reminded that in their unregenerate days they were "strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph 2:12). The entire epistle to the Hebrews is an exposition of the "better covenant" of which Christ is the Mediator (Heb 8:6).

Salvation through Jesus Christ is according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Act 2:23), and He was pleased to make known His eternal purpose of mercy, unto the fathers, in the form of a series of *covenants*, which were of different characters and revealed at various times. These covenants enter into the very nature, and pervade with their peculiar qualities the whole system of divine truth. They have an intimate connection with each other and a common relation to a single purpose, being, in fact, so many successive stages in the unfolding of the scheme of divine grace. They treat of the *divine* side of things, disclosing the source from which all blessings come to men, and making known the channel (Christ) through which they flow to them. Each one reveals some new and fundamental aspect of truth, and in considering them in their scriptural order we may clearly perceive the progress of revelation which they respectively indicated. They set forth the great design of God which was to be accomplished by the Redeemer of His people.

It has been well-pointed out that, "It is very obvious that because God is an intelligence He must have a plan. If He be an absolutely perfect intelligence, desiring and designing nothing but good, if He be an eternal and immutable intelligence, His plan must be one, eternal all-comprehensive, immutable—that is, all things from His point of view must constitute one system and sustain a perfect logical relation in all its parts. Nevertheless, like all other comprehensive systems, it must itself be composed of an infinite number of subordinate systems. In this respect, it is like these heavens which He has made, and which He has hung before our eyes, as a type and pattern of His mode of thinking and planning in all providence.

"We know that in the solar system our earth is a satellite of one of the great suns, and of this particular system we have a knowledge because of our position, but we know that this system is only one of myriads, with variations, that have been launched in the great abyss of space. So we know that this great, all-comprehensive plan of God, considered as one system, must contain a great many subordinate systems which might be studied

profitably if we were in the position to do so, as self-contained whole, separate from the rest" (Lectures by A.A. Hodge, 1823-1886). That "one system" or the eternal "plan" of God was comprised in "the everlasting covenant," the many "subordinate systems" are the various "covenants" which God made with different ones from time to time.

The everlasting covenant, with its shadowings forth in His temporal covenants, forms the basis of all His dealings with His people. Many proofs of this are to be met with in Holy Writ. For example, when God heard the groanings of the Hebrews in Egypt, we are told that He "*remembered his covenant* with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exo 2:24 and cf. 6:2-8). When Israel was oppressed by the Syrians in the days of Jehoahaz, we read, "And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, *because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*" (2Ki 13:23 and cf. Psa 106:43-45). At a later period, when God determined to show mercy unto Israel, after He had sorely afflicted them for their sins, He expressed it thus, "Nevertheless I will *remember my covenant with thee* in the days of thy youth" (Eze 16:60). As the Psalmist declared, "He hath given meat unto them that fear him: *He will ever be mindful of his covenant*" (Psa 111:5).

The same blessed truth is set forth in the New Testament that the covenant is the foundation from which proceed all the gracious works of God. This is rendered as the reason *for sending Christ* into the world, "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to *remember his holy covenant*" (Luk 1:72). Remarkable too is that word in Hebrews 13:20, "Now the God of peace, that *brought again from the dead* our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*" Another illustration of the same principle is found in Hebrews 10:15-16, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: *for after that he had said before*, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them"—the words we have placed in italics supply proof that the good which God does unto His people is grounded on His covenant. Anything which in Scripture is said to be done unto us "for Christ's sake" signifies it is done by virtue of that covenant which God made with Christ as the Head of His mystical body.

In like manner, when God is said to bind Himself by oath to the heirs of promise—"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Heb 6:17)—it is upon the ground of His covenant-engagement that He does so. In fact, the one merges into the other, *for* in Scripture covenanting is often called by the name of swearing, and a covenant is called an oath. "That thou shouldest enter into *covenant* with the LORD thy God, and into his *oath*, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day...Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath" (Deu 29:12, 14). "Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his *oath* unto Isaac" (1Ch 16:15-16). "And they entered into a *covenant* to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul...And they *sware* unto the LORD with a loud voice...And all Judah rejoiced at *the oath*" (2Ch 15:12, 14-15).

Sufficient should have already been said to impress us with the weightiness of our present theme, and the great importance of arriving at a right understanding of the divine covenants. A true knowledge of the covenants is indispensable to a correct presentation of the Gospel, for he who is ignorant of the fundamental difference which obtains between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace is utterly incompetent for evangelism. But by whom among us are the different covenants clearly understood? Refer unto them to the average preacher, and you at once perceive you are speaking to him in an unknown tongue. Few today discern what the covenants are in themselves, their relations to each other, and their consequent bearings upon the design of God in the Redeemer. Since the covenants pertain unto the very “rudiments of the doctrine of Christ,” ignorance of them must cause obscurity to rest upon the whole Gospel system.

During the palmy days of the Puritans considerable attention was given to the subject of the covenants, as their writings evince, particularly the works of Usher, Witsius, Blake, and Boston. But alas, with the exception of a few high Calvinists, their massive volumes fell into general neglect, until a generation arose who had no light thereon. This made it easier for certain men to impose upon them their crudities and vagaries, and make their poor dupes believe a wonderful discovery had been made in the “rightly dividing of the word of truth.” These men shuffled the Scriptures until they arranged the passages treating of the “covenants” to arbitrarily divide time into “seven dispensations” and partitioned off the Bible accordingly. How dreadfully superficial and faulty their “findings” are appear from the popular (far too “popular” to be of much value—Luke 16:15!) “Scofield Bible,” where no less than “eight covenants” are noticed, and yet *nothing* is said about the “Everlasting Covenant”!

If some think we have exaggerated the ignorance which now obtains upon this subject, let them put the following questions to their best-informed Christian friends, and see how many can give satisfactory answers. What did David mean when he said, “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: *for this is all my salvation*” (2Sa 23:5)? What is meant by, “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will *show them his covenant*” (Psa 25:14)? What does the Lord mean when He speaks of those who “*taketh hold of my covenant*” (Isa 56:6)? What does God intend when He says to the Mediator, “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zec 9:11)? To what does the apostle refer when he says, “That the covenant, that was confirmed before *of God in [or “to”] Christ*” (Gal 3:17)?

Before attempting to furnish any answers to these questions, let us point out the *nature* of a “covenant,” in what it consists. “An absolute complete covenant is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement between distinct persons, about the ordering and dispensing of things in their power, unto their mutual concern and advantage” (John Owen). Blackstone (Blackstone, Sir William, 1723-1780), the great commentator upon English law, speaking of the parts of a deed, says, “After warrants, usually follow *covenants*, or conventions, which are clauses of agreement contained in a deed, whereby either party may stipulate for the truth of certain facts, or may bind himself to perform, or give something to the other” (Vol. 2, p. 20), so that he includes three things: the parties, the terms, the binding agreement. Reducing it to still simpler language, we may say that a

covenant is the entering into of a mutual agreement, a benefit being assured on the fulfillment of certain conditions.

We read of Jonathan and David making a covenant (1Sa 18:3), which, in view of 1 Samuel 20:11-17, 42 evidently signified that they entered into a solemn compact (ratified by an oath, 1Sa 20:17) that in return for Jonathan's kindness in informing him of his father's plans—making possible his escape—David, when he ascended the throne, would show mercy to his descendants, cf. 2 Samuel 9:1. Again, in 1 Chronicles 11:3, we are told that all the elders of Israel (who had previously been opposed to him) came to David and he "made a covenant with them," which, in the light of 2 Samuel 5:1-3, evidently means that, on the consideration of his captaining their armies against the common foe, they were willing to submit unto him as their king. Once more, in 2 Chronicles 23:16, we read of Jehoiada the priest making a covenant with the people and the king that they should be the Lord's people, which, in the light of what immediately follows obviously denotes that he agreed to grant them certain religious privileges in return for their undertaking to destroy the system of Baal-worship. A careful consideration of these *human* examples will enable us to understand the better the covenants which *God* has been pleased to enter into.

Now as we pointed out in previous paragraphs, God's dealings with men are all based upon His covenant-engagements with them—He promising certain blessings upon their fulfillment of certain conditions. This being so, as George Sayles Bishop (1836-1914) pointed out, "It is clear that there can be but two and only two covenants possible between God and men—a covenant founded upon what *man shall do* for salvation, a covenant founded upon what *God shall do for him* to save him. In other words, a Covenant of Works and a Covenant of Grace" (Grace in Galatians, p. 72). Just as all the divine promises in the Old Testament are summed up in two chief ones—the sending of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit—so all the divine covenants may be reduced unto two, the other subordinate ones being only confirmations or adumbrations of them, or having to do with their economical administration.

We shall then, as the Lord enables, take up in the articles which follow, first, the Everlasting Covenant or Covenant of Grace, which God made with His elect in the person of their Head, and show how that is the sure foundation from which proceed all blessings unto them. Next, we shall consider the Covenant of Works, that compact into which the Creator entered with the whole race in the person of their human and federal head, and show how *that* had to be broken before the blessings agreed upon in the Covenant of Grace could be bestowed. Then we shall look briefly at the covenant God made with Noah, and more fully at the one with Abraham, in which the Everlasting Covenant was shadowed forth.

Then we shall ponder the more difficult Siniatic covenant, viewing it both as a confirmation of the Covenant of Works and in its peculiar relation to the national polity of Israel. Some consideration will also have to be given to the Davidic covenant, concerning which we feel greatly in need of more light. Finally, we shall point out how the Everlasting Covenant has been *administered* under the "old" and "new" covenants or economies. May the Holy Spirit graciously preserve us from all serious error, and enable us to write that which shall be to the glory of our covenant-God and the blessing of His covenant-people.

## THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

### *Carson on Esther (Part Seven)*

We shall now view the providence of God in the reception of Esther. Life and death are on the countenance of the despot, and according to the will of God he frowns or smiles. Had God designed her death, she would have found the king in another temper. But is not the king's heart in the hand of the Lord? Does He not turn it as He pleases? Esther is received most graciously and accosted in the most affectionate manner. The coldness that had overlooked her for thirty days gives place to the utmost warmth of affection, and, instead of the denunciation of death that she at first feared, she now hears the expressions of the most extravagant bounty. "Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that she obtained favour in his sight*: and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the scepter. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom" (Est 5:1-3). This favour was the spontaneous affection of the king's own heart, but in another point of view, it was God who gave her that favour. Who is so blind as not to see the hand of God in this? Who is so stupid as not to ascribe the glory to the Almighty in this matter? Who does not here recognize Joseph's God? "But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, *and gave him favour* in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Gen 39:21). Who does not see the Lord that always interfered for Israel and will always interfere for the deliverance of the true Israel of God? Who gave favour to the Israelites in the sight of the Egyptians on their leaving of Egypt? "And I will give this people favour," says God, "in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty" (Exo 3:21).

Christian, see here the security of God's people in doing duty. See the encouragement to confidence in His protection. From this learn the importance of humbling thyself before thy God in the hour of trial. See the duty of fasting and prayer in the time of trouble and danger. See the resource of God's people in the time of their calamity. If we need the protection of men, let us first ask it from God. If we prevail with Him, the power of the most mighty and of the most wicked must minister to our relief. Esther and her friends first cried unto the Lord, and humbled themselves before Him, and then she went to the king. "Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish" (4:15-16). How often do Christians look first to the means of deliverance! How often do they try every resource before they go to God with a simple and confident reliance on Him! How is their unbelief rebuked here! What encouragement does this hold out to confidence in God in the utmost danger! Only let us believe and all things are possible.

Esther's delay in preferring her request is another providential circumstance. It is strange that she did not hastily take advantage of the good-humor of the monarch, before she gave him time for reflecting and bad counsel. She might not find him again so complaisant. Her impatience to be delivered from a state of suspense must have favoured an immediate application. Yet without any assigned reason, she declined an explanation, not only at that time, but also at the first banquet. Whatever may have been Esther's design, the design of Providence is obvious. Had she at that time declared her request, Haman would not have had an opportunity of performing his part in the drama. This man of glory and of guilt must be allowed another scene on the stage of time to exhibit his character in all its bearings, and to show the disappointment and misery of the enemies of God. His vanity is not yet at the highest pitch. He must be brought to the pinnacle of vainglory.

When he arrives on the summit of earthly magnificence next to majesty itself, he must grasp at the shadow of royal splendour. But in the grasp, he must begin to totter to his fall. The crown he had devised to wear for a day, he must fix on the head of his greatest enemy. He must be made to minister to the man of God, whom he thought to destroy. Then shall he fall, never more to rise at all. He must prepare a gallows for Mordecai, but he must himself be hanged thereon.

Thus it shall be with the proud and prosperous wicked. Though they may not, like Haman, meet a retribution in this world, their honour will be succeeded with everlasting shame and misery. From the pinnacle of earthly glory, they shall be hurled into the depths of hell. This prosperity is not to be envied by the poorest Christian, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb" (Psa 37:1-2).

How vain is earthly glory! How irrational are the struggles of statesmen and courtiers for the giddy height of power! This moment their counsels may direct the destinies of nations, the next they may be hurled into the abyss of eternal misery. This day they may sit at the helm of empires, tomorrow they may appear before the dread tribunal of God. Now they are at the head of nobles and princes, and attract the notice of admiring millions, in an instant their souls may be required of them, and they may be covered with shame and everlasting contempt. Look at Haman. Was ever statesman or courtier more highly honoured and advanced? He is drunk with worldly glory, but his soul is still thirsty. To what purpose is he mounting yon dangerous height? It is that he may tumble into the abyss below. While his happiness appears to the beholder to be complete, his own bad passions make him miserable. Infamy and ruin hover over him while he ascends, and he falls a monument of the vanity of earthly-glory. What a sudden and dreadful reverse! What a lesson to all the children of pride! What an example to statesmen and courtiers!

We may here see also, that even in this world the most successful ambition is always disappointed in the hope of happiness from the enjoyment of its object. The scholar, the man of science, the senator, the warrior, having gained the utmost eminence to which their throbbing hearts aspired, are not only unsatisfied with glory, but perhaps more miserable than the lowest of the class to which they belong. There is still something that makes disappointment prey on their souls. In all his glory, Haman confessed himself miserable,

on account of the disrespect of an insolent Jew, "And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate" (Est 5:11-13).

All men are in pursuit of happiness, and all, by nature, seek it in the things of this world, but in them it never can be found. Even the acquisition of the things in which they suppose happiness to consist will disappoint them in the enjoyment. Man, at enmity with God, cannot be happy. The curse denounced against sin has entwined itself with all human enjoyments. It is seen not only in the thorns and briars, but also in the most voluptuous enjoyments of that royal luxury that crops the sweet buds of a terrestrial paradise. It lodges not only in the cottages of the poor, but seats itself on the thrones of princes. Solomon has found that all earthly enjoyments are but vanity of vanities. Sinner, return to God through Jesus Christ. There is no real happiness either in this world or the next, but in the favour of Him from whom you fly. Ye children of pride, see in Haman the disappointment of your hopes! How unsatisfactory are your present enjoyments! How soon must you exchange your earthly splendour for the abodes of endless and unmixed misery! The basest of your menials, if he knows the Saviour of sinners, is a happier man than you. Seek happiness, then, where it is to be found—in the knowledge of God. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Until you are delivered from your sins, the curse of God rests on you, and divine wrath must pursue you both in this world and the next. Lay them on the head of the Lamb of God, and be free from guilt, pollution, and misery. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jo 1:7).

Mordecai, with the threat of death against himself and his whole nation before his eyes, was evidently a happier man, from confidence in the divine protection, than Haman in the midst of the unbounded profusion of royal power. The children of God are, indeed, frequently sorrowful, but, paradoxical as the assertion may appear, if they enjoy their privileges, *they are always rejoicing*. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1Pe 1:6), yet even now they rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. They endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompense of reward. Even in the midst of all the afflictions to which he may be called for Christ's sake, the Christian has peace and joy. He is given strength for his day—faith in proportion to his trials. "Beloved," say the apostle Peter, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1Pe 4:12-14).

In this history of providential interposition, there is nothing more wonderful than the process that leads to the exaltation of Mordecai. We already noticed the circumstances that

put him in the way of royal notice. He had discovered a conspiracy against the life of the king. But why was he not rewarded immediately on the discovery? Why was he so long neglected or forgotten by the king? The smallest services to majesty usually meet an immediate and a magnificent retribution. Why was the greatest service that could be rendered to man overlooked till it was entirely forgotten? Is the saving of the life of a sovereign of so little estimation? Are absolute monarchs wont to disregard the saviours of their lives? Shall such profusion of royal bounty be showered on the head of Haman, while Mordecai remains unrewarded? What can account for this strange conduct? One thing can account for it, and nothing but this can be alleged as sufficient cause. The thing was overruled by Providence, for the fulfillment of the divine purposes. God not only works His will through the actions of all men, *but their very abstaining from action* is employed by Him for the same purpose. Had Mordecai been suitably rewarded at the time of his service, there would have been no opportunity for the wickedness of Haman, and the danger of Mordecai, to be so wonderfully manifested. Had Mordecai been already advanced, Haman would not have sought his ruin. But by the delay, Haman was insulted. Mordecai is brought to the brink of ruin from the wrath of the haughty favourite. Who is so blind as not to see the hand of God in this?

But if the reward of Mordecai at the time of his service would have been unsuitable to God's design in manifesting the wickedness of Haman, and His own power in the defense of His people, to have delayed it for a single day longer would have been ruin to the unbending Jew. His immediate death is planned by his enemies, and the next day would have seen him hanged on a gallows fifty cubits high. Haman was to ask the life of his enemy from the king, and to ask it was to obtain it. "Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made" (Est 5:14).

Mordecai, what miracle shall deliver thee now? Shall God speak from heaven or destroy thine enemies with His thunder? Shall the earth open and swallow them up that seek thy life? Shall the angels of the Lord carry thee away and hide thee from thy pursuers? No! thy God will save thee by His providence, in a way suitable to the rest of His conduct manifested in this book. Death hovers over thy head, but he shall not strike thee. The wings of Providence shall overshadow thee and turn aside the dart. Thou shalt have both life and glory without a miracle. But if thou was neglected at the time of so eminent service, what probability is there that thou shalt now be thought of? What friend of thine shall thy God send to the king, to remind him that he owes thee his life? Who shall put him in mind of his obligation at this critical moment?

Another day, and thou art a dead man! But thy God is not asleep, nor unmindful of thee in the time of danger. What is it that He cannot make the minister of His mercy to His servants? A remarkable interposition of His Providence shall bring thee into notice this very night. Though thou hast no friend to speak for thee, thy God shall cause the thoughts of the king to roam in the paths where he shall find thy claims displayed. Even in the unseasonable hour of night, the memorial of thy good deed shall come before him. The king lies down, but he cannot sleep—nor shall he sleep till he hears of Mordecai. "On that



night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him" (Est 6:1-3).

Astonishing! "On that night!" O gentle sleep, why didst thou forsake the king's couch on that critical night? There is indeed nothing strange to find thee leaving the bed of state, and fluttering with thy downy wings over the sooty cribs in the cottages of hard industry. But why did thy caprice choose to leave the couch of majesty in the critical moment? Didst thou not act as the minister of heaven? Sleep, it was *God* drove thee on that night from the bed of Ahasuerus.

## THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

### 5. *Its Nature*

Justification, strictly speaking, consists in God's imputing to His elect the righteousness of Christ, *that* alone being the meritorious cause or formal ground on which He pronounces them righteous—the righteousness of Christ is that to which God has respect when He pardons and accepts the sinner. By the *nature* of justification, we have reference to *the constituent elements* of the same, which are enjoyed by the believer. These are, the non-imputation of guilt or the remission of sins, and second, of the investing of the believer with a legal title to heaven. The alone ground on which God forgives any man's sins and admits him into His judicial favour, is the vicarious work of his Surety—that perfect satisfaction which Christ offered to the law on his behalf. It is of great importance to be clear on the fact that Christ was "made under the law" not only that He might redeem His people "from the curse of the law" (Gal 3:13), *but also* that they might "receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:4-5), that is, be invested with the privileges of sons.

This grand doctrine of justification was proclaimed in its purity and clarity by the Reformers—Luther, Calvin, Zanchius, Peter Martyr, etc., but it began to be corrupted in the seventeenth century by men who had only a very superficial knowledge of it, who taught that justification consisted merely in the removal of guilt or forgiveness of sins, excluding the positive admittance of man into God's judicial favour. In other words, they restricted justification unto deliverance from hell, failing to declare that it also conveys a title unto heaven. This error was perpetuated by John Wesley, and then by the Plymouth Brethren, who, denying that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer, seek to find their title to eternal life in a union with Christ in His resurrection. Few today are clear upon the *twofold* content of justification, because few today understand the nature of that righteousness which is imputed to all who believe.

To show that we have not misrepresented the standard teachings of the Plymouth Brethren on this subject, we quote from Mr. William Kelly's (1821-1906) "Notes on Romans." In his "Introduction," he states, "There is nothing to hinder our understanding 'the righteousness of God' in its usual sense of an attribute or quality of God" (p. 35). But how could an "attribute" or "quality" of God be "*upon* all them that believe" (Rom 3:22)? Mr. K. will not at all allow that the "righteousness of God" and "the righteousness of Christ" are one and the same, and hence, when he comes to Romans 4 (where so much is said about "righteousness" being *imputed* to the believer) he evacuates the whole of its blessed teaching by trying to make out that this is nothing more than our own faith, saying of Abraham, "his faith in God's word as that which he exercised, and which was accounted as righteousness" (p. 47).

The "righteousness of Christ" which is imputed to the believer consists of that perfect obedience which He rendered unto the precepts of God's law and that death which He died under the penalty of the law. It has been rightly said that, "There is the very same need of Christ's obeying the law in our stead, in order to the reward, as of His suffering the penalty of the law in our stead in order to our escaping the penalty; and the same reason why one should be accepted on our account as the other....To suppose that all Christ does in order to make atonement for us by suffering is to make Him our Saviour but in part. It is to rob Him of half His glory as a Saviour. For if so, all that He does is to deliver us from hell, He does not purchase heaven for us" (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758). Should any one object to the idea of Christ "purchasing" heaven for His people, he may at once be referred to Ephesians 1:14, where heaven is expressly designated "*the purchased possession*."

The imputation to the believer's account of that perfect obedience which his Surety rendered unto the law for him is plainly taught in Romans 5:18-19, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Here the "offence" or "disobedience" of the first Adam is set over against the "righteousness" or "obedience" of the last Adam, and inasmuch as the disobedience of the former was an actual transgression of the law, therefore the obedience of the latter *must be* His active obedience unto the law, otherwise the force of the apostle's antithesis would fail entirely. As this vital point (the chief glory of the Gospel) is now so little understood, and in some quarters disputed, we must enter into some detail.

The one who was justified upon his believing sustained a twofold relation unto God: first, he was a responsible creature, born under the law; second, he was a criminal, having transgressed that law—though his criminality has not canceled his obligation *to* obey the law any more than a man who recklessly squanders his money is no longer due to pay his debts. Consequently, justification consists of two parts, namely, an acquittal from guilt, or the condemnation of the law (deliverance from hell), and the receiving him into God's favour, on the sentence of the law's approval (a legal title to heaven). And therefore, the ground upon which God pronounces him just is also a double one, as the one complete satisfaction of Christ is viewed in its two distinct parts—namely, His vicarious obedience unto the precepts of the law, and His substitutionary death under the penalty of the law, the merits of both being equally imputed or reckoned to the account of him who believes.

Against this it has been objected, "The law requires no man to obey and die too." To which we reply in the language of J. Hervey (1750), "But did it not require a *transgressor* to obey and die? If not, then transgression robs the law of its right, and vacates all obligation to obedience. Did it not require the *Surety* for sinful men to obey and die? If the Surety dies only, He only delivers from penalty. But this affords no claim to *life*, no title to a *reward*—unless you can produce some such edict from the Court of heaven, Suffer this, and thou shalt live. I find it written 'In keeping of them (thy commandments) there is great reward' (Psa 19:11), but nowhere do I read, In undergoing Thy curse, there is the same reward. Whereas, when we join the active and passive obedience of our Lord—the peace-speaking blood with the life-giving righteousness—both made infinitely meritorious and infinitely efficacious by the divine glory of His person, how full does our justification appear! How firm does it stand!"

It is not sufficient that the believer stand before God with no sins upon him—that is merely *negative*. The holiness of God requires a *positive* righteousness to our account—that His law be perfectly kept. But we are unable to keep it, therefore our Sponsor fulfilled it for us. By the blood-shedding of our blessed Substitute, the gates of hell have been forever shut against all those for whom He died. By the perfect obedience of our blessed Surety, the gates of heaven are opened wide unto all who believe. My title for standing before God, not only without fear, but in the conscious sunshine of His full favour, is because Christ has been made "righteousness" unto me (1Co 1:30). Christ not only paid all my debts, but fully discharged all my responsibilities. The law-Giver is my law-Fulfiller. Every holy aspiration of Christ, every godly thought, every gracious word, every righteous act of the Lord Jesus, from Bethlehem to Calvary, unite in forming that "best robe" in which the seed royal stand arrayed before God.

Yet sad to say, even so widely-read and generally-respected a writer as the late Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918), said in his book, "The Gospel and Its Ministry" (chapter on Justification by Blood), "Vicarious obedience is an idea wholly beyond reason—how could a God of righteousness and truth reckon a man who has broken law to have kept law, because someone else has kept it? The thief is not declared to be honest because his neighbour or his kinsman is a good citizen." What a pitiable dragging down to the bar of sin-polluted human reason, and a measuring by worldly relations, of that divine transaction wherein the "manifold wisdom of God" was exercised! What is impossible with men is possible with God. Did Sir Robert never read that Old Testament prediction wherein the Most High God declared, "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a *marvelous work* among this people, even a marvelous work and a *wonder*: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isa 29:14).

It is pointed out that, "In the human realm, both innocence and righteousness are transferable in their effects, but that *in themselves* they are untransferable." From this it is argued that neither sin nor righteousness are in themselves *capable of* being transferred, and that though God treated Christ *as if He were* the sinner, and deals with the believer *as though he were* righteous, nevertheless, we must not suppose that either is actually the case, still less ought we to affirm that Christ *deserved* to suffer the curse, or that His people are *entitled* to be taken to heaven. Such is a fair sample of the theological ignorance of these degenerate times, such is a representative example of how divine things are being

measured by human standards, by such sophistries is the fundamental truth of *imputation* now being repudiated.

Rightly did William Rushton (1831), in his "Particular Redemption," affirm, "In the great affair of our salvation, our God stands single and alone. In this most glorious work, there is such a display of justice, mercy, wisdom and power, as never entered into the heart of man to conceive, and consequently, *can have no parallel* in the actions of mortals. 'Who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me' Isa 45:21." No, in the very nature of the case, no analogy whatever is to be found in any human transactions with God's transferring our sins to Christ or Christ's obedience to us, for the simple but sufficient reason that *no such union exists* between worldlings as obtains between Christ and His people. But let us further amplify this counter-imputation.

The afflictions which the Lord Jesus experienced were not only sufferings at the hands of men, but also enduring punishment at the hand of God, "It pleased the LORD to bruise him" (Isa 53:10). "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: *smite the shepherd*" (Zec 13:7) was His edict. But lawful "punishment" presupposes *criminality*. A righteous God had never inflicted the curse of the law upon Christ unless He had *deserved* it. That is strong language we are well aware, yet not stronger than what Holy Writ fully warrants, and things need to be stated forcibly and plainly today if an apathetic people is to be aroused. It was because God had transferred to their Substitute all the sins of His people that, *officially*, Christ deserved to be paid sin's wages.

The translation of our sins to Christ was clearly typed out under the law, "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, [expressing *identification with* the substitute], and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat [denoting *transference*], and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall *bear upon him* all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited" (Lev 16:21-22). So too it was expressly announced by the prophets, "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:6, 11). In that great Messianic Psalm, the sixty-ninth, we hear the Surety saying, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and *my sins* are not hid from thee" (Psa 69:5)—how could the spotless Redeemer speak thus, unless the sins of His people had been *laid upon* Him?

When God imputed sin to Christ as the sinner's Surety, *He charged Him with the same*, and dealt with Him accordingly. Christ could not have suffered in the stead of the guilty unless their guilt had been first transferred to Him. The sufferings of Christ were penal. God by act of transcendent grace (to us) laid the iniquities of all that are saved upon Christ, and in consequence, divine justice finding sin upon Him, *punished Him*. He who will by no means clear the guilty must strike through sin and smite its bearer, no matter whether it be the sinner himself or one who vicariously takes his place. But as G. S. Bishop well said, "When justice once strikes the Son of God, justice exhausts itself. Sin is amerced in an Infinite Object." The atonement of Christ was contrary to *our* processes of law because it rose above *their* finite limitations!

Now as the sins of him who believes were, by God, transferred and imputed to Christ so that God regarded and treated Him accordingly—visiting upon Him the *curse* of the law, which is death, even so the obedience or righteousness of Christ is, by God, transferred and imputed to the believer so that God now regards and deals with him accordingly—bestowing upon him the *blessing* of the law, which is life. And any denial of that fact, no matter by whomsoever made, is a repudiation of the cardinal principle of the Gospel. “The moment the believing sinner accepts Christ as his Substitute, he finds himself not only freed from his sins, but *rewarded*, he gets all heaven because of the glory and merits of Christ (Rom 5:17). The atonement, then, which we preach is one of absolute exchange (1Pe 3:18). It is that Christ took our place literally, in order that we might take His place literally—that God regarded and treated Christ as the sinner, and that He regards and treats the believing sinner as Christ.

“It is not enough for a man to be pardoned. He, of course, is then innocent—washed from his sin—put back again, like Adam in Eden, just where he was. But that is not enough. It was required of Adam in Eden that he should actually *keep* the command. It was not enough that he did not break it, or that he is regarded, through the blood, as though he did not break it. *He must keep it*: he must continue in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. *How is this necessity supplied?* Man must have a righteousness, or God cannot accept him. Man must have a *perfect* obedience, or else God cannot reward him” (G. S. Bishop). That necessary and perfect obedience is to be found alone in that perfect *life*, lived by Christ in obedience to the law, *before* He went to the cross, which is reckoned to the believer’s account.

It is not that God treats *as* righteous one who is not actually so (that would be a fiction), but that He actually constitutes the believer so, not by infusing a holy nature in his heart, but by reckoning the obedience of Christ to his account. Christ’s obedience is legally transferred to him so that he is now rightly and justly regarded as righteous by the divine law. It is very far more than a naked *pronouncement* of righteousness upon one who is *without* any sufficient foundation for the judgment of God to declare him righteous. No, it is a positive and judicial act of God “whereby, on the consideration of the mediation of Christ, He makes an effectual grant and donation of a true, real, perfect righteousness, even that *of Christ Himself* unto all that do believe, and accounting it as theirs, on His own gracious act, both absolves them from sin, and granteth them right and title unto eternal life” (John Owen).

It now remains for us to point out *the ground on which* God acts in this counter-imputation of sin to Christ and righteousness to His people. That ground was *the Everlasting Covenant*. The objection that it is unjust the innocent should suffer in order that the guilty may escape loses all its force once the Covenant-Headship and responsibility of Christ is seen, and the *covenant-oneness with Him* of those whose sins He bore. There could have been no such thing as a *vicarious* sacrifice unless there had been some *union* between Christ and those for whom He died, and that relation of union must have subsisted *before* He died, yea, before our sins were imputed to Him. Christ undertook to make full satisfaction to the law for His people because He sustained to them the relation of a *Surety*. But *what* justified His acting as their Surety? He stood as their Surety

because He was their *Substitute*. He acted *on their behalf*, because He stood *in their room*. But *what* justified the substitution?

No satisfactory answer can be given to the last question until the grand doctrine of everlasting covenant-oneness comes into view, *that* is the great underlying relation. The federal oneness between the Redeemer and the redeemed, the choosing of them *in* Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), by which a legal union was established between Him and them, is that which alone accounts for and justifies all else. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one*: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb 2:11). As the Covenant-Head of His people, Christ was so related to them that their responsibilities necessarily became His, and we are so related to Him that His merits necessarily become ours. Thus, as we said in an earlier article, three words give us the key to and sum up the whole transaction—substitution, identification, imputation—all of which rest upon covenant-oneness. Christ was substituted *for* us, because He is one *with* us—identified with us, and we with Him. Thus God dealt with us as occupying *Christ's* place of worthiness and acceptance. May the Holy Spirit grant both writer and reader such an heart-apprehension of this wondrous and blessed truth, that overflowing gratitude may move us unto fuller devotedness unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

## WELCOME TIDINGS

Following our annual custom, the time has again arrived for us to indicate to our loyal supporters before the throne of grace something of the manner and extent to which the Hearer of prayer has been pleased to grant their requests. As we turn to this happy task, once more our favourite passage comes to mind, "His compassions fail not. They are new *every* morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lam 3:22-23). So we have found it through another year. Hardly a single day has passed but what the mails have brought us some 'welcome tidings' that the God of all grace is condescending to bless unto one and another the labours of our pen. Some of our more intimate friends may like to know that the editor and his wife usually spend from 11 to 11:30 each morning in going over the mail together, and O what cause for thanksgiving and praise are we provided with.

Letters to hand during the past twelve months have been more numerous than ever, which makes it difficult now to give some selections from their contents. To convey anything like an adequate concept of what the Holy Spirit has wrought in some lives would require us to publish their letters at length, but this would consume far more space than is here available. Thank God, one day all the redeemed will learn the complete story of the wondrous works of God in providence and grace, not only by means of the instrumentality of this little magazine, but of all the varied agencies which our sovereign God has seen fit to employ. What a soul-stirring, heart-melting, praise-provoking record that will be! How

each and all of the redeemed will marvel and adore when they learn of the feeble instruments which divine grace has used to produce works which will last for all eternity!

"I have been reading your Studies for two years, and it was not long before I began to realize the difference between *saying* I am a Christian and really *being* one. From that time on, God has led me wondrously. First of all, He made me realize I must leave—for a *smaller* house" (Brother in Wales). O that it might please the Lord to move others of His dear children to do likewise: to so work in them a spirit of self-denial that they would live more like strangers and pilgrims in this scene. "The series on Heart Work did me much good. They truly stirred me up to my Christian duty of keeping the heart as of supreme importance. And now I watch and pray going to my work and coming back at night, more than ever before. I talk with my Lord going through the dark and torturous lane that leads to my home, singing psalms and making melody in my heart, and the way seems much shorter" (Brother in New Jersey).

"The Lord has dealt wonderfully with me this past year, keeping me in closer touch with Himself than ever before, and I do not hesitate to say that He used your ministry to bring this about. So once again I am rejoicing that in all my unworthiness He has granted me the privilege of receiving the Studies. What food for meditation there is in that little magazine!" (Sister in Washington). "Many of the articles are very searching especially on Salvation and Assurance, and I have been led into deep searching of my heart to see if it could be possible I had been deceived. I seem to come so far short of God's requirements...and I am led to cry to Him for more love. I do thank Him for the precious Word that is opened up in the Studies—it is about all the spiritual help we receive. Practically all the professing Christians here are taken up with the radio" (Sister in California).

"On the whole, Studies have given me much occasion during the past year for praising God, but as I suppose it is with others, so it is with me—some portions call for special mention. In my case it is what you have written on Dispensationalism. If God were pleased to make it possible for those articles to be printed in pamphlet form, I feel it would be a work attended with much blessing" (Brother in New York). "Your articles on Dispensationalism still appeal to me personally, and rightly upset the prevalent and erroneous ideas of our 'spiritual leaders.' As you have expressed it, the 'rightly dividers' have wrongly divided the family of God" (Brother in Australia). "I am gratified to see that you are devoting a column to the refutation of what is called Dispensationalism. It is very distressing to find how much this virus has distorted the thought and corrupted the faith of so many Christians in this Country" (Professor of Theology in U.S. Seminary).

"As I sit down to write a few words of appreciation, I find myself unable to express or convey in any measure the experiences I have had while reading your ministry. The heart-searchings and questionings, the doubts and fears of one's faith—whether real or false after all. How conscience has been pricked time and time again. But on the other hand, what sweet seasons of communion and fellowship, times of refreshing, while reading such articles as Hebrews and those on the Spirit" (Brother in England). "Your recent articles on Heart Work and the Christian's Armour are proving a great help to me. I believe the Holy Spirit is showing me more plainly just what sin is in *God's* sight, and the necessity for

confessing *every* sin. May He give me grace to come into subjection to all His righteous and holy claims upon me” (Sister in Nebraska).

“I desire to herewith thank you most sincerely for not being ‘weary in well doing,’ because you have been sending me the Studies so regularly which I cannot help but appreciate as *the gem* of present-day Christian literature. I find it to be a faithful dissemination of God’s truth, more than ever needed today” (Bible Teacher in Australia). “Your writings are of a very searching character, but unless we are willing to be searched and emptied of all self, God will not fill us and use us for His glory. O that we all may desire to walk closer to Him who alone is good and holy, having our eyes fixed on things above. Thank you ever so much for all the good things you have been enabled to bring us from the Word of God, and for all the kind exhortations you have given us” (Preacher in Brooklyn).

“I am greatly blest by reading your articles, and my prayer is that many more may read them” (Preacher in Arizona). “I cannot express in words the spiritual value of the Studies. They have been helpful and rich in suggestion for a spiritual, Scriptural ministry” (Preacher in Michigan). “Your Studies have brought both ‘meat for the eater and seed for the sower’ through another year” (Preacher in Alabama). “Praise God for Studies. Your pen is God-anointed, the Truth is searching, but blessed to those who wish to go all the way with God” (Preacher in Minnesota). “I am very glad to say that I find your Studies increasingly helpful. They do indeed meet a long and deeply felt need” (Preacher in England). “I am sending this gift with deep appreciation for the Studies you have so kindly sent me. They have been of much help and blessing to me” (Native Evangelist in China).

“The main thing I read the Studies for is to find therein that which *condemns* my sinful self, and put that right with God, and I have been tasting more of the joy of obedience” (Sister in Australia). “I have been helped very much by Studies, especially the practical side of Christianity—unless we know how to *live* the Word, our mouth does little good” (Sister in Connecticut). “We, as many others, have been blessed through your labour of love in sending forth the Studies. There have been many things helpful, as well as edifying, and there have been things which call us to heart searching, yet through them all, we are greatly benefited” (Brother in California). “I have been helped by reading Studies—although they show us what we are, they keep us from being self-satisfied” (Sister in Australia). “Just now my heart was melted by reading that blessed article on David. It was written just for me, for truly I have been passing through the same ways and the same temptations” (Brother in France).

“I want to express my gratitude to you for so kindly sending me Studies when I was unable to contribute. I cannot express adequately the great benefit they have been to me. Through my constant striving after a compliance with *all* God’s commands, I have been isolated from many ‘professors,’ but your magazine has brought me into such sweet communion with its author and God, that I have great peace. I pray that God will long spare you to continue them” (Brother in Canada). “The Christian’s Armour, Furnace Conduct, Hearing the Rod, are precious, and I pray much for power to retain and *put into practice* in daily life to His glory, for I realize in some measure the responsibility of



receiving such deep teaching, and I know that it is only His Spirit within who can produce the life pleasing to God" (Sister in England).

"I want to take this opportunity of thanking you for the Studies which I have been receiving, to encourage you in your labour of love, by telling you that the Lord has indeed blessed them to me—both in my spiritual life, private study of Scripture, and in public exposition of the Word. What has been of particular help is the practical application of Doctrine to daily living, a subject sadly neglected, but greatly needed today" (Preacher in London). "While I know you are not asking for any compensation from man for the work you are doing, yet I am the beneficiary, and it is as little as I can do to let you know it. Experimental religion, if not rare, at least is seldom heard of these days, which makes your writings all the more precious and valuable to me. So many seem to have a creedal idea of religion without a heart-knowledge of its verities. I thank the Lord for bringing me into acquaintance with you" (Preacher in Virginia).

"Thank you for the Studies which have brought a great blessing to me, and, as you mention in your letter of December, no heaven-sent revival will come till there is a faithful preaching of *the law*. I believe that the truths you have emphasized so strongly are the *very* thing we need, for how can, or will, sinner or saint seek God's grace, unless we see self in its true light!" (Brother in California). "I cannot tell you what a help and encouragement Studies have been to me. It is very rarely I am able to hear any preaching, as I am constantly preaching myself, so your magazine has supplied what I so much need" (Preacher in England). "Your letters and the Studies, next to the Word itself, are to us still the most valued of all writings. They cause us to examine ourselves in the light of God's truth. They give comfort in time of need. They make us realize deep down in our souls that the truths enunciated by you are the only solid foundation on which a poor, needy soul may rest his hopes for this life and for eternity" (Brother in Australia).

"Sometimes I *translate* your articles so that they may be a blessing to many believers" (Brother in France). "Many of your thoughts are translated to the Chinese brethren. It gives me pleasure to break the Bread of Life to them" (Brother in China). "I wish to ask for your kind permission to translate some of your articles into our Czechoslovakian language. I am sure our Christian friends would enjoy them" (Brother in Czechoslovakia). Similar quotations might be made from others, showing how the Lord is so ordering things that numbers of His people in foreign lands may share with us some of the wondrous riches of His grace. Only the day to come will reveal the full fruitage.

Our purpose in inserting so many excerpts is to encourage our prayer-helpers, that they may thank and praise the Lord for His infinite grace in blessing this monthly messenger to so many of His dear people, and to stir them up unto yet more earnest and definite supplication, that hundreds more of the household of faith may be reached and blest too. Also we desired to give proof that *God is still working*—not only is His ear not heavy that it cannot hear, but His arm is not shortened. We have less and less patience with those 'signs of the times' men who seem to delight in raking amid the filth of the world, and occupying the minds of professing Christians with little else than evil. Let us be more engaged with the wondrous works *of God*—in creation, providence, and grace. Let the reader ponder Philippians 4:8 and turn it into prayer!

For several years past, the number of names on our mailing-list has been slightly but steadily decreasing. In the middle of November, when making out our list for 1934, we felt obliged to drop three hundred and fifty to whom we sent the magazine in 1933, seeing they had made no sign that it was appreciated. For the next six weeks we were much in prayer that God would stir up many of them to write us and also send us in many new names, but by the end of December our list was twenty-five *behind* the number we had twelve months previously. It then occurred to us that here was a golden opportunity for the exercise of *faith*. From then on we have daily sought God to “*enlarge* my coast” (1Ch 4:10) and give us a twenty per-cent *increase* in the circulation of “Studies” this year! We hope that scores will co-operate in prayer with us to this end. “All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23)! We are thankful to report that gifts have come in *very* freely during the last six months, and that we both continue to be preserved in excellent health. The joy of the Lord is our strength. With Christian greetings, A. W. and V. E. Pink.

## A PRAYER

“Reveal, blessed Jesus! reveal Thy glory to mine eye, and shed abroad Thy love in my heart. Cause me to rest completely satisfied in Thy undertaking, and the fulfilling end of the law and enable me to live upon Thy inexhaustible fullness. 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, 1780).

