

Vol. XII

July, 1933

No. 7

STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

THE HOLY SPIRIT

8. The Holy Spirit and Christ: Part Two

We are afraid that our treatment of the particular aspect of this many-sided theme which is now before us is rather too abstruse for some of our readers to follow, yet we trust they will kindly bear with us as we endeavor to write for those who are anxious for help on the deeper things of God. As stated before, we are seeking to minister unto widely different classes, unto those with differing capacities, and therefore we wish to provide a varied spiritual menu. He who is hungry will not leave the table in disgust because one dish thereon appeals not to him. We believe the later articles of this series (D.V.) will be suited unto a much larger group of our friends. Meanwhile we ask their forbearance while we seek to give something like completeness to our exposition of the subject as a whole.

“As the humanity of Christ was assumed into the hypostatic union, we may fitly say, on the one hand, that *the Person of Christ* was anointed, so far as *the call to office* was concerned. While we bear in mind, on the other hand, that it is *the humanity* that is anointed in as far as we contemplate the actual supplies of God’s gifts and graces, aids and endowments, necessary for the execution of His office. But that we may not be engulfed in one-sidedness, it must be also added that the Holy Spirit, according to the order of the Trinity, interposes His power only to execute the will of the Son...As to the unction of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit, it was different according to the *three grades* successively imparted. The first grade was at the incarnation, the second coincided with His baptism, the third and highest grade was at the ascension, when He sat down on His mediatorial throne and received from the Father the gift of the Spirit to bestow upon His Church in abundant measure” (George Smeaton, 1814-1892).

We have already contemplated the *first* anointing of the Lord Jesus when, in His mother’s womb, His humanity was endowed with all spiritual graces and when through

childhood and up to the age of thirty, He was illuminated, guided, and preserved by the immediate operations of the third Person in the Godhead. We come now to briefly consider His *second* anointing, when He was formally consecrated unto His public mission and divinely endowed for His official work. This took place at the river Jordan, when He was baptized by His forerunner. Then it was, while emerging from the waters, that the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father was heard testifying unto His infinite pleasure in His incarnate Son (Mat 3:16-17). All the references to that unique transaction call for close examination and prayerful study.

The first thing that is recorded after this is, "And Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luk 4:1). The reason why we are told this seems to be for the purpose of showing us that Christ's humanity was confirmed by the Spirit and made victorious over the devil by His power. Hence it is we read that, right after the temptation, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luk 4:14). Next we are told that He entered the synagogue at Nazareth and read from Isaiah 61, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the LORD," and declared, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luk 4:18-19, 21).

Here, then, is to be seen the leading distinction between the first and second "grades" of Christ's "unction" from the Spirit. The first was for the forming of His human nature and the enduing it with perfect wisdom and faultless holiness. The second was to endow Him with supernatural powers for His great work. Thus the former was personal and private, the latter official and public. The one was bestowing upon Him of spiritual graces, the other imparting to Him ministerial gifts. His *need* for this double "anointing" lay in the creature-nature He had assumed and the servant-place which He had taken, and also as a public attestation from the Father of His acceptance of Christ's person and His induction into His mediatorial office. Thus was fulfilled that ancient oracle, "The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding" (Isa 11:2-3).

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (Joh 3:34). This at once brings out the pre-eminence of Christ, for *He* received the Spirit as no mere man could. Observe the contrast pointed by Ephesians 4:7, "But unto every one of us is given grace *according to the measure* of the gift of Christ." In none but the Mediator did "all the fullness of the Godhead" dwell "bodily" (Col 2:9). The uniqueness of the Spirit's relation to our Lord comes out again in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life *in Christ Jesus* hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Note carefully the words we have italicized. Not only does this statement reveal to us the source of all Christ's actions, but it intimates that more habitual grace dwells in Him than in all created beings.

The third degree of Christ's unction was reserved for His exaltation and is thus described, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the

Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Act 2:33). This highest grade of unction, when Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness *above* His fellows (Psa 45:7), and which became apparent at Pentecost, was an ascension-gift. The declaration which Peter gave of it was but a paraphrase of Psalm 68:18, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.” That bountiful supply of the Spirit was designed for the erecting and equipping of the New Testament Church and it was fitly bestowed after the ascension upon those for whom the Spirit was purchased.

As Mediator, the Lord Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit for the execution of *all* His offices and for the performance of all His mediatorial work. *His right to send* the Spirit into the hearts of fallen men was acquired by His atonement. It was the well-earned *reward* of all His toil and sufferings. One of the chief results of the perfect satisfaction which Christ offered to God on behalf of His people was His right to now bestow the Spirit upon them. Of old it was promised Him, “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death” (Isa 53:11-12). So too, His forerunner had announced, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire” (Mat 3:11).

What has just been said above is further borne out by Galatians 3:13-14, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” The promised Spirit followed the great work of canceling the curse as the effect follows the cause. To give the *Holy Spirit* to men clearly implied that their sins had been put away, see Leviticus 14:14, 17 for the type of this—the “oil” [emblem of the Spirit] placed *upon* the “blood”! Not only does Christ’s right to bestow the Holy Spirit upon His redeemed intimate the cancellation of their sins, but it also clearly argues His *divine* dignity, for no mere *Servant*, however exalted his station, could act thus or confer such a gift!

From the varied quotations which have been made from Scripture in reference to Christ’s unction for all His offices, it sometimes appears as if He were in the subordinate position of needing direction, aid, and miraculous power for the purposes of His mission (Isa. 11:1-3; 61:1-2, e.g.). At other times, He is said to *have* the Spirit (Rev 3:1), to *give* the Spirit (Act 2:33), to *send* the Spirit (Joh 15:26), as if the Spirit’s operations were subordinated to the Son. But all difficulty is removed when we perceive, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that there was a *conjoined* mission in which the Son and the Spirit act together for the salvation of God’s elect. The Son effected redemption—the Spirit reveals and applies it to all for whom it was purchased.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

68. *The Faith of Jacob (11:21)*

It has been well said that, "Though the grace of faith is of universal use throughout our whole lives, yet it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has its great work to do at the last, to help believers to finish well, to die to the Lord, so as to honour Him, by patience, hope and joy, so as to leave a witness behind them of the truth of God's Word and the excellency of His ways, for the conviction and establishment of all that attend them in their dying moments" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). God is greatly glorified when His people leave this world with their flag flying at full mast. When the spirit triumphs over the flesh, when the world is consciously and gladly left behind for heaven. For this, *faith* must be in exercise.

It is not without good reason, we may be sure, that in the description which the Holy Spirit has given us of the life of faith in Hebrews 11, He has furnished us with no less than three examples—and these in successive verses—of the actings of faith in the final crisis and conflict. We believe that, among other reasons, God would hereby assure His trembling and doubting children that He, who has begun a good work in them, will most certainly sustain and complete the same. That He, who has in His sovereignty committed this precious grace to their hearts, will not suffer it to languish when its support is most sorely needed. That He, who has enabled His people to exercise faith during the vigor of life, will not withdraw His quickening power during the weakness of death.

As the writer grows older, he is saddened by discovering how very little is now being given out, either orally or in written ministry, for the instruction and comfort of God's people concerning the dying of Christians. The devil is not inactive in seeking to strike terror into the hearts of God's people, and knowing this, it is the bounden duty of Christ's servants to expose the groundlessness and hollowness of Satan's lies. Not a few have been deterred from so doing by heeding the mistaken notion that for a Christian to think of and prepare for death is dishonouring to Christ and inconsistent with the "imminency" of His coming. But such a notion is refuted in our present passage. Let it be carefully considered that, when in Hebrews 12:1, the Holy Spirit bids *us* "run with patience the race that is set before us," He bases that exhortation on the fact that we are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," (Heb 12:1) the reference being unto the men of God who are before in Hebrews 11, who all "*died in faith*" (v. 13).

A God-given and God-sustained faith is not only sufficient to enable the feeblest saint to overcome the solicitations of the flesh, the attractions of the world, and the temptations of Satan, but it is also able to give him a triumphant passage through death. This is one of the prominent things set forth in this wondrous and blessed chapter. In Hebrews 11, the Holy Spirit has set out at length the works, the achievements, the fruits, the glories of faith, and not the least of them is its power to support the soul, comfort the heart, illuminate the understanding, and direct the will in the last earthly struggle. While Hebrews 11:20, 21, and 22 have this in common, yet each contributes its own distinctive feature. In the case of Isaac, we see a dying faith triumphing over the affections of the flesh. In the case of Jacob,

dying faith overcoming the interference of man, and in Joseph, scorning the worthless pageantry of the world.

Of old Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Num 23:10)! Well might he wish to do so. The writer has not a shadow of a doubt that every Christian who has, in the main current of his life, walked with God, his last hours on earth (normally speaking, for we consider not here the exceptional cases of those taken home suddenly) are the brightest and most blissful of all. Proverbs 4:18, of itself, is fully sufficient to warrant this thought. The Christian is not always permitted to bear testimony of this so as to be intelligent unto those surrounding him, but even though his poor body be convulsed with pain and physical unconsciousness set in, yet the soul cutting adrift from its earthly moorings is then blest with a sight and sense of his precious Redeemer such as he never had before (Act 7:55).

"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa 37:37). A peaceful death has concluded the troublous life of many a good man. As the late C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) said on this verse, "With believers it may rain in the morning, thunder at midday, and pour torrents in the afternoon, but it must clear up ere the sun go down." Most aptly do his words apply to the case of Jacob. A stormy passage indeed was his, but the waters were smooth as he entered the port. Cloudy and dark were many of the hours of his life, but the sunset bathed it with radiant splendor at its close.

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying" (Heb 11:21). Ah, but to "die" by faith, we must needs live by faith. And a life of faith is not like the shining of the sun on a calm and clear day, its rays meeting with no resistance from the atmosphere. Rather is it more like the sun rising upon a foggy morning, its rays struggling to pierce through and dispel the opposing mists. Jacob walked by faith, but the exercise thereof encountered many a struggle, and had to fight hard for each victory. In spite of all his faults and failings (and each of us is just as full of the same), Jacob dearly prized his interest in the everlasting covenant, trusted in God, and highly esteemed His promises. It is a very faulty and one-sided estimate of his character which fails to take these things into account. The old nature was strong within him, yes, and so too was the new.

Though his infirmities led Jacob to employ unlawful means for the procuring of it, yet his heart *valued* the "birthright," which profane Esau despised (Gen 25). Though he yielded unto the foolish suggestions of his mother to deceive Isaac, yet his faith covetly eyed the promises of God. Though there may have been a measure of fleshly bargaining in his vow, yet Jacob was anxious for the Lord to be his God (Gen 28:21). Though he stole away from Laban in fear, when his father-in-law overtook him, he glorified God in the tribute he paid Him (Gen 31:54). Though he was terrified at Esau, nevertheless, he sought unto the Lord, pleaded His promises (Gen 32:12), and obtained an answer of peace. Though later he groveled at the feet of his brother, in the sequel we find him prevailing with God (Gen 32:28). Equally with Abraham and Isaac, "by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles" (Heb 11:9).

But it was during the closing days of his life that Jacob's faith shone most brightly. When giving permission for Benjamin to accompany his other sons on their second trip to Egypt, he said, "God Almighty [or "God the Sufficient One"] give you mercy before the man" (Gen 43:14). This was the title under which the Lord had blessed Abraham (Gen

17:1), as it was also the one Isaac employed when he blessed Jacob (Gen 28:3). Thus in using it here, we see how Jacob rested on the covenant promise. Arriving in Egypt, the aged patriarch was presented unto its mighty monarch. Blessed is it to see how he conducted himself. Instead of cringing before the ruler of the greatest empire of the old world, we are told that "Jacob blessed Pharaoh" (Gen 47:7). With becoming dignity, he conducted himself as a child of the King of kings (Heb 7:7) and carried himself as became an ambassador of the Most High.

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph" (Heb 11:21). This takes us back to what is recorded in Genesis 48. What is found there is quite distinct from what is said in the next chapter, where Jacob is seen as God's prophet announcing the future of all his twelve sons. But here he is concerned only with Joseph and his two sons. Before considering the particular detail which our text treats of, let us note the sentence which immediately precedes it. "And he blessed Joseph" (Gen 48:15). In this we may admire the overruling hand of God and also find here the key to what follows.

In Deuteronomy 21:17, we read, "But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his." It was the right of the firstborn to have a double portion, and this is exactly what we find Jacob bestowing upon Joseph, for both Ephraim and Manasseh were allotted a distinct tribal part and place in the promised inheritance. This, by right, belonged unto Joseph, though the devil had tried to cheat him out of it, using Laban to deceive Jacob by substituting Leah in Rebekah's place, and Joseph was *her* firstborn. And now by the providence of God the primogeniture is restored to him. So too God permitted Reuben to sin so that the way might be open for this, "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph)" (1Ch 5:1).

Earlier in this interview, Jacob had said, "And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are mine*" (Gen 48:5). Those two sons of Joseph had been borne to him by an Egyptian wife and in a foreign land, but now they were to be adopted and incorporated into the body of the holy seed. For note, when Jacob blessed them he said, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac" (Gen 48:16). By that blessing, he sought to draw their hearts away from Egypt and their kinfolk there that they might be annexed to the church and share with the people of God.

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph" (Heb 11:21) In this case, the Revised Version is more accurate, "blessed *each* of the sons of Joseph," for their blessing was not collective, but a distinctive and discriminating one. In fact, the leading feature of the dying Jacob's faith is most particularly to be seen at this very point. When Joseph brought his two sons before their grandfather to receive his patriarchal blessing, he placed Manasseh, the elder, to his right hand and Ephraim, the younger, to his left. His object in this was that Manasseh might receive the first and superior portion. Right there it was that the faith of Jacob was most tested. At this time Joseph was governor over all Egypt and second only to Pharaoh himself in authority and power. Moreover he was Jacob's favorite son, yet the dying patriarch had now to withstand him.

“And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn” (Gen 48:14). Herein we behold *the manner* in which the blessing was bestowed. Once more the younger, by the appointment of God, was preferred before the elder, for the Lord distributes His favors as He pleases, saying “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” (Mat 20:15). Unto the high sovereignty of God Jacob here submissively bowed. It was not a thing of chance that he crossed his hands, for the Hebrew of “guiding his hands wittingly” is “made his hands to understand.” It was the understanding of faith, for his physical eyes were too dim to see what he was doing—true faith is ever opposed to sight!

“And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk” (Gen 48:15). Very blessed is this. Despite his physical decay, there was no abatement of his spiritual strength. Notwithstanding the weakness of old age, he abode firm in faith and in the vigorous exercise of it. Here in the verse before us, we behold Jacob recognizing and asserting the covenant which Jehovah had made with his fathers. This is the very life of faith—to lay hold of, draw strength from, and walk in the light of the everlasting covenant, for it is the foundation of all our blessings, the charter of our inheritance, the guaranty of our eternal glory and bliss. He who keeps it in view will have a happy deathbed, a peaceful end, and a God-honouring exit from this world of sin and suffering.

“The God which fed me all my life long unto this day” (Gen 48:15). As Jacob had made a solemn acknowledgment of the spiritual blessings which he had received by virtue of the everlasting covenant, so he also owned the temporal mercies of which he had been the favored recipient. “It was a work of faith to retain a precious thankful remembrance of divine providence in a constant provision of all needful temporal supplies, from first to last, during the whole course of his life” (John Owen, 1616-1683). As it is an act of faith to cordially consent unto the dealings of God with us in a providential way, so it is a fruit of faith to make a confession by the mouth concerning Him. Note: God is honoured before those attending him when a dying saint bears testimony unto His faithfulness in having supplied all his need.

“The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads” (Gen 48:16). “He reflects on all the hazards, trials, and evils that befell him, and the exercise of his faith in them all. Now all his dangers were past, all his evils conquered, all his fears removed, he retains by faith a sense of the goodness and kindness of God in rescuing him out of them all” (John Owen). “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee” (Deu 8:2). As the children of Israel were called upon to do this at the close of their wilderness journey, so we cannot be more profitably employed in the closing hours of our earthly pilgrimage than by recalling and reviewing that grace which delivered us from so many dangers known and unknown.

“And let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (Gen 48:16). Jacob was not ambitious for a continuance of their present greatness in Egypt, but desired for them the blessings of the covenant. Joseph could have left to his sons a rich patrimony in Egypt, but he brought them to Jacob to receive his benediction. Ah, the baubles of this world are

nothing in comparison with the blessings of Zion, see Psalm 128:5; 134:3; 133:3. The spiritual blessings of the Redeemer far exceed in value the temporal mercies of the Creator. It was the former which Joseph coveted for his sons and which Jacob now prophetically bestowed.

“And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father’s hand, to remove it from Ephraim’s head unto Manasseh’s head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon *his* head (Gen. 48:17-18). Here we see the will of man asserting itself, which, when left to itself, is ever opposed to God. Joseph had *his* wishes concerning the matter and did not hesitate to express them, though, be it noted unto his credit, he meekly acquiesced at the finish.

“And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it” (Gen 48:19). It was at *this* point that Jacob’s faith shone most brightly. The repeated “*I know* it” marks the great strength of his faith. He had “heard” from God (Rom 10:17), he believed God, he submitted to God. Jacob was no more to be influenced by “the will of man” here, than in the preceding verse Joseph was by “the will of the flesh.” Faith overcame both. Learn, my reader, that sometimes faith has to cross the wish and will of a loved one!

Plainly it was “by faith” that the dying Israel blessed each of the sons of Joseph. Certainly it was not by sight. “To ‘sight’ what could be more unlikely than that these two young Egyptian princes, for such they were, should ever forsake Egypt, the land of their birth, and migrate into Canaan? What more improbable than that they should ‘each’ become a separate tribe? What more unlooked for than that, of these two, the younger should be exalted above the elder, both in importance and number?” (E.W. Bullinger, 1837-1913)

“He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations” (Gen 48:19). Not only does God make a great difference between the elect and the reprobate, but He does not deal alike with His own children, neither in temporals nor spirituals. There are some of His favored people to whom God manifests Himself more familiarly, grants them more liberal supplies of His grace, and more plentiful comforts. There was a specially favored three among the twelve apostles. Some Christians have more opportunities to glorify God than others, higher privileges of service, greater abilities and gifts—the “talents” were not distributed equally, one had five, another three, another one. But let us not murmur. All have more than they can improve.

“And worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff” (Heb 11:21). There is some room for question as to what incident the apostle is here referring to. Some think that (like Moses did “exceedingly fear and quake,” Heb 12:21) it is entirely a New Testament revelation. Others (the writer included) regard it as alluding to what is recorded in Genesis 47:31. The only difficulty in connection with this view is that here we read Jacob “worshipped upon the top of his staff,” there that he “bowed himself upon the bed’s head.” Concerning this variation, we agree with Owen that “he did *both*, namely bow towards the head of the bed, and at the same time lean on his staff, as we are assured by comparing the divine writers together.”

The occasion of Jacob's "worship" was as follows, "And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said" (Gen 47:29-30). It was far more than a sentimental whim which moved the patriarch to desire that his body be interred in the holy land. It was the working of faith, a blessed exhibition of his confidence in God.

It was not the pomp and pageantry of his burial which concerned Jacob, but *the place* of it which he was so solicitous about. Not in Egypt among idolaters, must his bones be laid to rest, for with them he cared not to have any fellowship in life, and now he desired no proximity unto them in death—he would show that God's people are a *separated* people. No, it was in the burying place of his fathers he wished to be laid. First, to show forth his union with Abraham and Isaac in the covenant. Second, to express his faith in the promises of God, which concerned Canaan and not Egypt. Third, to draw off the minds of his descendants from a continuance in Egypt—setting before them an example that *they* should think of returning to the promised land at the proper time, and thereby confirming them in the belief of possessing it. Fourth, to signify he would go before them, and as it were, take possession of the land on their behalf. Fifth, to intimate that Canaan was a type of heaven, the "better country" (Heb 11:16), the eternal resting place of all the people of God.

The asking of Joseph to place his hand under his thigh was a gesture in swearing (Gen 24:2-3), as the raising of the hand now is with us. It was not that Jacob doubted his son's veracity, but it signified the eagerness of his entreaty and the intensity of his mind about the matter. What an important thing it was to him. No doubt it was also designed to forestall any objection which Pharaoh might make after his death, see Genesis 50:5-6. Jacob was in bed at the time, but gathering together his little remaining strength, he raised himself to sit upright, and then bowing his body, and so that it might be supported, he leaned upon his staff, worshipping God.

The Holy Spirit's mention here of Jacob's reverent gesture in worshipping God, intimates to us that it well becomes a worshipper of the Most High to manifest the inward devotion of the soul by a fitting posture of the body. God has redeemed both and He is to be honoured by both, 1 Corinthians 6:20. Shall we serve God with that which costs us nothing? Sitting or lying at prayer savors more of sloth and carelessness, than of reverence and zeal. Carnal men, in pursuit of their fleshly lusts, can weary and waste the body. Shall Christians shelter behind every inconvenience and excuse? Christ exposed His body to the utmost suffering, shall not His love constrain us to deny selfish ease and sloth!

Having secured the promise from Joseph that his will should be carried out, Jacob bowed before God in worship, for now he realized the Lord was making good the promise recorded in Genesis 46:4. In his great weakness, he had bowed toward his bed's head so as to adore God, completing now his representation of reverence and faith by leaning upon the top of his staff. In that emblematic action he signified his complete dependence upon God, testified to his condition as a pilgrim in the earth, and emphasized his weariness of the world and his readiness to part from it. He praised God for all He had done for him and

for the approaching prospect of everlasting bliss. Blessed is it to find that the Holy Spirit's final word about Jacob in Scripture (Heb 11:21) depicts him in the act of *worship*!

THE LIFE OF DAVID

20. His Chastening

Some of our readers may wonder why we have given to the present article such a title and what bearing it has upon the contents of 1 Samuel 26. If so, we would ask them to thoughtfully ponder the closing verses of the preceding chapter. Much is lost by many readers of the Bible through failing to observe the connection between the ending of one chapter and the beginning of another. Even when incidents which are totally distinct and different follow each other, a spiritual eye may often discern an intimate moral relation between them and therein many valuable lessons may be learned. Such is the case here. At first glance there appears to be no logical link uniting the further uncalled-for attack of Saul upon David and his having taken unto himself a wife a little before, but the two things *are* related as is effect to cause and here is to be found the key which opens to us the divine significance of what is now to be before us.

"The way of transgressors is hard" (Pro 13:15). No doubt the primary reference in these words is to the wicked, yet the principle of them unquestionably holds good in the case of the redeemed. In the keeping of God's commandments there is "great reward" (Psa 19:11), in this life (1Ti 4:8) as well as in that which is to come, but in the breaking of God's commandments bitter chastening is sure to follow. Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace (Pro 3:17), but he who departs from Wisdom's ways and follows a course of self-will, must expect to smart for it. So it was now in the experience of David. It is true that in the case of marital infidelity the Mosaic law permitted the innocent one to obtain a divorce and marry again, but it made no provision for a plurality of wives and *that* was what David was now guilty of, and for his sin he was sorely chastised.

Ah, my reader, let this truth sink deeply into thine heart—God is exercising a moral government over the saved as well as the unsaved and He will no more wink at the sins of the one than He will of the other. David was saved by grace through faith apart from any good works as the meritorious cause, as truly as we are, but he was also called to be holy in all manner of conversation or behavior, as we are. Grace does not set aside the requirements of divine holiness, instead, it reigns "Through righteousness" (Rom 5:21). And when one who has been saved by grace fails to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Ti 2:12), then the chastening rod of God falls upon him that he may be a "partaker of his holiness" (Heb 12:10). And this, be it noted, is not only a part of the Father's dealings with His *children*, but it is also a part of His ways with His *subjects* as the Moral Ruler of this world.

As we suggested in the seventh article of this series, it was David's being united in marriage to the unbelieving Michal, which accounts for the painful experiences he passed through while a member of Saul's household. Trials do not come upon us haphazardly, they come from the hand of God. Nor does He act capriciously, but according to the righteous principles of His government. In an earlier chapter, we saw how that God graciously protected David when the devil-driven king sought his life and how that he moved him to return home. Why, then, should His restraining hand be removed and Saul allowed to go forth again on a bloodthirsty mission? Why should the brief respite David had enjoyed now be so rudely broken? The answer is that God was again using his enemy to chasten David for his recent sin, that he might, by painful experience, learn anew that the way of transgressors *is* hard.

"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa 48:18). What a difference it makes whether the ways of a Christian please or displease the Ruler of this world. It is the difference of having God *for* or having Him *against* us—not in the absolute sense, not in the eternal sense, but in His *governmental* dealings with us. When the heart be right with God, then He shows Himself strong on our behalf (2Ch 16:9). When our ways please Him, then He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us (Pro 16:7). Then how diligently should we guard our hearts and ponder the path of our feet (Pro 4:23, 26). Carelessness invites disaster. Disobedience ensures chastening. Sinning will withhold good things from us (Jer 5:25).

It is very important to see that while the penal and eternal consequences of the Christian's sins have been remitted by God, because atoned for by Christ, yet the disciplinary and temporal effects thereof are not cancelled—otherwise the saints would never be sick or die. It is not God in His absolute character, acting according to His ineffably holy nature, but God in His official character, acting according to the principles of His righteous government, which deals with the present conduct of His people, rewarding them for their obedience, and chastening for disobedience. Hence, when God makes use of the devil and his agents to scourge His people, it is not unto their ultimate destruction, but unto their present plaguing and disciplining. And this is exactly what we see in our present lesson. Saul was allowed to disturb David's rest, but not to take his life. In like manner, the devil is often permitted to whip us, but never to devour us.

"And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?" (1Sa 26:1). The reader may remember that the Ziphites had shown themselves unfriendly towards David on a former occasion. Was it not then a hazardous thing for him to return unto those parts? How are we to account for his acting so injudiciously and thus courting danger? Ah, let us recall what was pointed out under 1 Samuel 21:1 in article 8. When the soul is out of touch with God, when fellowship with Him has been broken by giving way to the lusts of the flesh, the judgment is dulled and imprudent conduct is sure to be the effect. It is not without reason that godliness is so often designated "wisdom" (e.g. Psalms 90:12) and that a course of evil-doing is termed "folly."

David had acted imprudently in marrying Abigail. He had committed a grave sin in taking unto wife Ahinoam. We say he had acted "imprudently" in marrying Abigail. The

time was not propitious for that. He was then a homeless wanderer, in no condition to give unto a wife the care and devotion to which she is entitled. Holy Scripture declares, "To everything there is a season" (Ecc 3:1). While on this point, let it be said that, in the judgment of the writer, young men who are out of work and have no good prospects of soon obtaining any, are acting imprudently, yea, rashly, in getting married. Let them possess their souls in patience (Luk 21:19) and wait a more favorable season, and not tempt God. So too those in straitened circumstances who continue having an increase in their families are imprudent, nay, disobeying 1 Corinthians 7:29. These are days for practicing *self-denial*.

"And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?" (1Sa 26:1). If we venture upon the enemy's territory we must expect to be harassed by him. It is probable these Ziphites were fearful that should David succeed Saul on the throne, then he would avenge himself upon them for their previous perfidy. If so, they were now the more anxious that he should be captured and slain. Afraid to tackle him themselves, they sent word to the king of David's present whereabouts. Their message presented a temptation for Saul to return again unto that evil course which he had abandoned, temporarily at least. Thus does one evil-doer encourage another in wickedness.

"Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph" (1Sa 26:2). Poor Saul, his goodness was a morning cloud and as the early dew it vanished away. "How soon do unsanctified hearts lose the good impressions which their convictions have made upon them and return with the dog to their vomit" (Matthew Henry). O what need has even the Christian to pray earnestly unto God, that since he still has so much of the tinder of corruption left within, the sparks of temptation may be kept far from him, lest when they come together they are "set on fire of hell" (Jam 3:6). The providential restraint of God in causing Saul to leave off pursuing David because the Philistines were invading his territory, had wrought no change *within* him. His evil disposition towards God's anointed was the same as ever and now that the favorable opportunity to seize David presented itself, he gladly made the most of it.

The action of Saul here provides a solemn illustration of a well-known principle—if sin be not dethroned and mortified, it will soon recover its strength, and when a suitable temptation is presented, break out again with renewed force. How often do the servants of God witness souls under deep conviction, followed by a marked reformation, which leads them to believe that a genuine work of grace has taken place within them, only to see them, a little later, return to their sins and become worse than ever. So here. Upon receiving word from the Ziphites, Saul's enmity and malice revived and like Pharaoh of old, he again hardened his heart and determined to make another effort to remove his rival. And thus it is with many a one who has been sobered and awed by the Word. After a brief season, Satan and his agents suggest such thoughts as tend to rekindle the smothered flame, and then the lusts of the flesh are again allowed free play. O my reader, beg God to *deepen* your convictions and write His law on your heart.

"And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed” (1Sa 26:3-4). “David neither fled, nor went out to meet Saul, when he was fully certified that he was actually come forth to destroy him! Had a much greater army of uncircumcised Philistines marched against him, he would doubtless have faced them with his small company, and trusted in God for the event, but he would not fight against the ‘Lord’s anointed’” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

“David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed” (1Sa 26:4). From the previous verse it would seem David had perceived that some large force was advancing into that part of the country where he and his men were now quartered. Though not certain as to who was at the head of the approaching army, he probably suspected that it was none other than Saul and therefore did he now send out spies to make sure. He would not fully believe that the king had again dealt so basely with him, till he had the clearest proof of it. Thereby does he set us an example not to believe the worst of our enemies till we are really forced to do so by incontestable evidence.

“And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him” (1Sa 26:5). Most likely it was in the dusk of the evening that David now went forward to reconnoiter, surveying from close range the order of Saul’s camp, and the strength of its entrenchments. Though he knew the Lord was his Protector, yet he deemed it necessary to be upon his guard and make use of means for his safety. Well for us when we act as wisely as serpents, but as harmless as doves. It is to be noted that David did not entrust this critical task unto any of his underlings, but performed it in person. The leader ought always to take the lead in the most difficult and dangerous tasks.

“Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee” (1Sa 26:6). David now addressed himself unto two of those who were, most likely, his closest attendants, asking who was bold enough to volunteer in accompanying him on an exceedingly dangerous enterprise—that of two men entering a camp of three thousand soldiers. There is little room for doubt that David was prompted by the Spirit to act thus, from whom he probably received assurance of divine protection. Thereby he would be afforded another opportunity of demonstrating to Saul and Israel his innocence. Ahimelech was probably a proselyted Hittite, and not having that faith in the God of Israel which such a severe testing called for, held back. But Abishai, who was David’s own nephew (1Ch 2:15-16), readily agreed to accompany David.

“So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him” (1Sa 25:7). What an extraordinary situation now presented itself before the eyes of David and his lone companion! Had the watchmen failed at their point of duty? There was none to sound an alarm. The entire camp was wrapped in slumber so profound that, though the two uninvited visitors walked and talked in their midst, none was aroused. Ah, how easily can *God* render impotent an entire host of enemies! All the forces of nature are under His immediate control. He can awaken from the sleep of death and He

can put the living into such a heavy sleep that none can awaken them. There was Saul and all his forces as helpless as though they were in fetters of iron.

“Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time” (1Sa 26:8). In view of what had transpired in the cave (1Sa 24:4-6), no doubt Abishai thought that though David scrupled to kill Saul with his own hand, yet he would allow one of his officers to slay him. Thus would an end be put to the difficulties and dangers unto himself and his adherents, by cutting off at one blow their inveterate prosecutor. The more so, since Providence had again placed Saul in their power, apparently for this very purpose. This illustrates the fact that often it requires as much godly resolution to restrain the excesses of zealous, but unspiritual friends, as it does to stand firm against the rage of incensed enemies.

A powerful temptation was here set before David. Had their positions been reversed, would Saul hesitate to slay him? Why, then, should David allow sentiment to prevail? Moreover, did it not look as though *God* had arranged things to this very end? The previous opportunity was not nearly so strongly marked as this one. Saul had, as it were, accidentally wandered into the cave, but here was something extraordinary—the entire camp was wrapped in a supernatural slumber. Furthermore, his attendant urges upon him that it *was* the will of God to now take things into his own hand. But David was not to be moved from his loyalty to the throne. First, he told Abishai that it would be *sinful* to lay violent hands upon one whose person was sacred (v. 10), for Saul had been appointed by God and anointed for his office. Second, he declared it *was unnecessary*. God would sooner or later cut him off (vv. 10-11). Remembering how the Lord had just before smitten Nabal, he left it to Him to avenge his cause.

“So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul’s bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them” (1Sa 26:12). Here we see David as a type of Christ in His wonderful forbearance toward His enemies and in His faith in God, 1 Peter 2:23. David’s procedure was an effective method of convincing Saul that he *could* have slain him. And what a proof to the king that the Lord had departed from him and was protecting David! “Thus do we lose our strength and comfort when we are careless and secure, and off our watch” (Matthew Henry), gives the practical lesson for us in Saul’s losing his spear and cruse of water.

HEART WORK

Part Two

“Do you think you came into this world to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, unto the satisfaction of the will of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk unprofitably—it may

be corruptly—in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough time to live unto God, in the very essentials of that life? Alas, you came into the world under this law, ‘It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment’ (Heb 9:27), and the end [purpose] why your life is here granted unto you, is that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the principal part of your time be not improved with respect unto this end, you will yet fall under the sentence of it unto eternity” (John Owen, 1670).

Multitudes seem to be running, but few “pressing toward the mark.” Many talk about salvation, but few experience the joy of it. There is much of the form of godliness, but little of the power of it. O how rare it is to find any who know anything experimentally of the power that separates from the world, delivers from self, defends from Satan, makes sin to be hated, Christ to be loved, truth to be prized, and error and evil to be departed from. Where shall we find those who are denying self, taking up their cross daily, and following Christ in the path of obedience? Where are they who hail reproach, welcome shame, and endure persecution? Where are they who are truly getting prayer *answered* daily, on whose behalf God is showing Himself strong? Something is radically wrong somewhere. Yes, and as surely as the beating of the pulse is an index to the state of our most vital physical organ, so the lives of professing Christians make it unmistakably evident that their *hearts* are diseased!

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2Ch 16:9). Ah, do not the opening words indicate that those with “perfect” hearts are few and far between, that they are hard to locate? Surely it does, and it has ever been the case. David cried, “Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa 12:1). The Lord Jesus had to lament, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought” (Isa 49:4). The apostle Paul declared, “I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Phi 2:20-21). “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me” (2Ti 1:15). And things are neither better nor worse today. But, my reader, instead of talking about the “apostasy of Christendom,” instead of being occupied with the empty profession all around us, what about our own hearts? Is *your* heart “perfect”? If so, even in these so-called “hard times” God is “showing Himself strong” in thy behalf, that is, He is working miracles for you and ministering to you in a way that He is not to the empty professors. But if God is not so doing, then *your* heart is *not* “perfect” toward Him and it is high time for you to take stock and get down to serious soul business.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). The pains which multitudes have taken in religion are but lost labour. Like the Pharisees of old, they have been tithing anise and mint and cummin, but neglecting the weightier matters. Many have a zeal, but it is not according to knowledge. They are active, but their energies are misdirected. They have wrought “many wonderful works” (Mat 7:22), but they are rejected of God. Why? Because their employments are self-selected or man-appointed, while the one great task which God has assigned is left unattended to. All outward actions are worthless while our hearts be not right with God. He will not so much as hear our

prayers while we regard iniquity in our hearts (Psa 66:18)! Let us, then, endeavor to further point out what is signified by this supremely important exhortation.

To “keep” the heart signifies *to have the conscience exercised about all things*. In numbers of passages, “heart” and “conscience” signify one and the same thing, see 1 Samuel 24:5; 2 Samuel 24:10; 1 John 3:21, etc. The apostle Paul declared, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16), and herein he sets before us an example which we need to emulate. After the most careful and diligent manner, we must strive to keep the conscience free from all offense in the discharge of every duty that God requires and in rendering to every man what is due him. Though this is never perfectly attained in this life, yet every regenerate soul has a real concern for such a state of conscience. A “good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly” (He. 13:18) is worth far more than rubies.

This is to be something more than an empty wish, which gets us nowhere. The apostle said, “Herein do I *exercise* myself” (Act 24:16). It was a matter of deep concern to him and one to which he assiduously applied himself. He laboured hard in seeing to it that his conscience did not flatter, deceiving and misleading him. He was conscientious over both his outer and inner life, so that his conscience accused and condemned him not. He was more careful not to offend his conscience than he was not to displease his dearest friend. He made it his daily business to live by this rule, abstaining from many a thing which natural inclination drew him unto, and performing many a duty which the ease-loving flesh would shirk. He steadily maintained a care not to break the law of love toward either God or man. And when conscious of failure, he saw to it that by renewed acts of repentance and faith (in confession) each offense was removed from his conscience, instead of allowing guilt to accumulate thereon.

“Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1Ti 1:5). The “commandment” is the same as the “holy commandment” of 2 Peter 2:21, namely, the Gospel, as including the moral law, which enjoined perfect love both to God and to our neighbour. The “end” or design—that which is enjoined and whose accomplishment is prompted thereby—is *love*. But spiritual “love” can only proceed from “a pure heart,” that is, one which has been renewed by grace and thereby delivered from enmity against God (Rom 8:7) and hatred against man (Ti 3:3), and cleansed from the love and pollution of sin. Spiritual “love” can only proceed out of a “good conscience,” that is, a conscience which has been made tender and active by grace, which has been purged by the blood of Christ, and which sedulously avoids all that defiles it and draws away from God. Its possessor being influenced to act conscientiously in the whole of his conduct. It is solemn to note that those who “put away” a good conscience soon make shipwreck of the faith (1Ti 1:19).

To “keep” the heart means to “*set the Lord always before*” us (Psa 16:8). Some may object that those words spoke, prophetically, of the Lord Jesus. True, but remember He has left us an example *that we should follow* his steps (1Pe 2:21). What, then, is it to “set the Lord always before” us? It means to remember that His eye is ever upon us and that we act accordingly. It means to remember that we must yet render to Him a full account of our stewardship and to let this fact constantly influence us. It means that we are to ever have *His* honour and glory in view, living not to please ourselves, but acting according to His

revealed will. It means that we should strive, especially, to have *God* before our souls whenever we engage in any religious exercises. The Omniscient One will not be imposed upon by outward forms or empty words. They who worship Him “*must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (Joh 4:24). “Seek ye my face,” O to respond with David, “*My heart said unto thee, thy face, LORD, will I seek*” (Psa 27:8).

“The well is seldom so full that water will at first pumping flow forth, neither is the heart commonly so spiritual—even after our best care in our worldly converse—as to pour itself into God’s bosom freely, without something to raise and elevate it. Yea, often the springs of grace lie so low that pumping only will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul before the affections rise” (William Gurnall, 1660). Does not this explain why, after saying, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name,” that the psalmist *added*, “Bless the LORD, O my soul” (Psa 103:1-2)!

Ah, note well those words, dear reader, “Bless the Lord, O my *soul*,” and not merely by the lips. David dreaded lest, while the outward was awake, his inner man should be asleep. Are you equally careful as to this? David laboured so that no dullness and drowsiness should steal over his faculties. Therefore did he add, “*and all that is within me, bless his holy name*”—understanding, conscience, affections, and will. O that we may not be guilty of that awful sin about which Christ complained, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; *but their heart is far from me*” (Mat 15:8). Again we would note the repetition in Psalm 103:2, “Bless the LORD, *O my soul*.” How this shows us that we need to bestir ourselves repeatedly when about to approach the Majesty on High, seeking with all our might to throw off the spirit of sloth, formality, and hypocrisy.

Of old God’s servants complained, “There is none that calleth upon thy name, that *stirreth up himself* to take hold of thee” (Isa 64:7). Are we any better, my friends? Do we really bestir ourselves to “take hold” of God. We shall never be like Jacob—successful “wrestlers” with Him—until we do. There is little wonder that so few obtain answers to their petitions unto the throne of grace. It is not simply prayer, but “the effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam 5:16). Before seeking to approach the Most High we need to “prepare” our heart (Job 11:13) and beg God to “strengthen” it (Psa 27:14), so that we may be enabled to draw near with becoming reverence and humility, so that we may trust in Him with all our hearts (Pro 3:5), love Him with all our hearts (Mat 22:37), and praise Him with “the whole heart” (Psa 9:1).

O the frightful impiety which is now to be witnessed on almost every side, of heedlessly rushing into the holy presence of God (or rather, going through the form of so doing), and gabbling off the first things that come to mind. And all of us are more affected by this evil spirit than we imagine, for “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33). We need to definitely seek grace and fight against so grievously insulting God. We need to fix our minds steadily on the august perfections of God, reminding ourselves of *whom* it is we are about to approach. We need to seek deliverance from that half-hearted, ill-conceived, careless, and indifferent worship which is offered by so many. We need to ponder God’s grace and goodness unto us and lay hold of His encouraging promises that

our affections may be inflamed and our souls brought into that gracious temper which is suited unto Him to whom we owe our all.

But not only do we need to diligently watch our hearts when about to approach God in prayer or worship, but also when turning to His Holy Word. All ordinances, helps, and means of grace, are but empty shells, unless we meet with God in them and for that, He must be sought, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). We are not at all likely to obtain any more soul profit from the reading of the Scriptures than we are from the perusal of men's writings, if we approach them in the same spirit we do human books. God's Word is addressed unto the conscience and it is only as we strive to have our hearts suitably affected by what we read therein, that we may justly expect to be helped spiritually.

God has bidden us, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck" (Pro 6:20-21). And again, "Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart" (Pro 7:2-3). This cannot be done by reading the Bible for a few minutes and then an hour later forgetting what has been read. Shame on us that we should treat God's Word so lightly. No, we must meditate therein day and night (Psa 1:2). Unless we do so, we shall never be able to say, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa 119:11), nor shall we be able to say, "Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes" (Psa 119:12).

To "keep" the heart signifies *attending diligently to its progress or decays in holiness*. What health is to the body, holiness is to the soul. "I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (Psa 77:6). This is absolutely essential if a healthy spiritual life is to be maintained. A part of each day should be set aside for the study of the heart and cultivation of its faculties. The more this is done, the less difficulty shall we experience in knowing *what* to pray for! O shame on us that we are so diligent in thinking about and caring for our bodies, while the state of our souls is so rarely inquired after. Emulate the example of Hezekiah, who "humbled himself for the pride of his heart" (2Ch 32:26). Peter's heart was lifted up with self-confidence. His fall was preceded by "an haughty spirit" (Pro 16:18).

It is *in the heart* that all backsliding begins. Observe closely your affections and see whether God or the world is gaining ground in them. Watch whether you experience increasing profit and pleasure in reading God's Word or whether you have to force yourself to it in order to discharge a duty. Observe the same thing in connection with prayer, whether you are finding increased or decreased liberty in pouring out your heart to God, whether you are having more freedom in so doing, or whether it is becoming an irksome task. Examine well your spiritual graces and ascertain whether your faith be in lively exercise, feeding upon the precepts and promises of God, whether your hope is lively, anticipating the glorious future, whether your love be fervent or cold, whether patience, meekness, self-control be greater or less.

To "keep" the heart signifies *to store it well with pure and holy things*. As the most effective way of getting a child to willingly drop some dirty trifle is to proffer it an apple or orange, so the best security for the soul against the allurements of Satan is to have it engaged with a lovelier and more satisfying Object. A heart which is filled and engaged

with good is best protected against evil. Note well the order in Philippians 4:6-8, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things.*” The heart which casts all its care upon God is well guarded from anxiety by His peace, but a pure atmosphere must be breathed if the soul is to be kept healthy and that is best promoted by thinking about wholesome, lovely, and praise-provoking things.

Commune frequently with Christ. Dwell upon His loveliness, stay in the sunshine of His presence, refresh your soul with those gifts and graces He is ever ready to bestow, and you shall have in yourself “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Joh 4:14). “Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things [the beauty of God and the glory of Christ], as it is our duty that they should be, and as it is our happiness when they are, what access could sin—with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons, with its envenomed baits—have upon our souls? How we should loathe all its proposals, and say unto them, Get you hence as an abominable thing” (John Owen).

(D.V. to be continued)

DISPENSATIONALISM

3. The Church of God

One might reasonably conclude that the Greek word for “church” settles forever not only the meaning of the term itself, but also the scope of its membership. Ek-klesia, by common consent, signifies “out-called” or “called out.” It is a separated company. Thus the “Church of God” is synonymous with “God’s elect.” The Church of God is neither broader nor narrower in its range than the entire election of grace. To deny this is, either on the one hand to repudiate the unequivocal meaning of “ek-klesia” or to reject on the other hand the Scripture doctrine of election. It is both a significant and ominous fact that the vast majority of “dispensationalists,” who limit the “Church” to believers of the Christian era, are men who so far from holding fast the precious and basic truth of God’s sovereign and unconditional election, insist that God loves everybody, that Christ atoned for the sins of the whole human race, and that the Holy Spirit is trying to save all who hear the Gospel. This, by itself, is quite sufficient to discredit these men in the eyes of all who love sound doctrine.

That the “Church” and “the elect” are co-extensive in their personal may be seen by a comparison of Colossians 1:24 with 2 Timothy 2:10. In the former, we read, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.” The “afflictions of Christ” do not

refer to the sufferings of Christ personally, for *those* were all finished when He was exalted to the Father's right hand. No, the allusion is unto "Christ" *mystical*, that is, unto the members of His mystical body, who are united to Him by such a near and vital bond, and with whom He has such a fellow-feeling for their infirmities, that *they* are called by *His* name. Those "afflictions" the apostle "filled up," not vicariously, but ministerially, "for" the Church's good.

Now in 2 Timothy 2:10 the same apostle declared, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake." The "elect" are the ones whom God chose from everlasting unto salvation. For them the Lord Jesus obeyed and died, for them the Gospel is preached, and for their sakes ministers are qualified and commissioned to teach and suffer what they do in the faithful prosecution of this mission. But what we would here call particular attention unto is that, in Colossians 1:24, Paul speaks of his "sufferings" for "Christ's body's sake, which is the church," while in 2 Timothy 2:10, he says he endured those sufferings for "the elect's sake," which proves that the "Church" and the "elect" are the *same persons*.

In Acts 20:28, we read of "the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Here is declaration free from all ambiguity, which leaves an honest heart in no doubt whatever as to *who* compose the members of the "Church." It is *all* for whom the precious blood of Christ was shed, Old Testaments saints just as truly as the New. Inasmuch as in the eternal purpose of God, Christ was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, His blood had a promissory or prospective value, as well as a retrospective. That is to say, the work which He historically completed at Calvary, accomplished as much for the elect of God who lived hundreds of years before that work was performed, as for those of God's elect who live centuries after it was finished.

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25-27). And *who are* they that were "loved" by Christ antecedently to His giving Himself for them? The New Testament saints only? No, He had a people in Old Testament times too, unto whom He said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3). Yea, of whom He declared, "The saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight" (Psa 16:3), and those people have been washed, cleansed, and sanctified by Him.

The "Church of God," then, is that chosen generation, that royal priesthood, that holy nation, that peculiar people, whom He hath called out of darkness into His marvelous light to show forth His praises for all eternity (1Pe 2:9). Its members comprise the whole of that favoured company whom God chose in Christ their Head before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before Him. Whom He, in love, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph 1:3-4). Its members are those to whom Christ referred when He said, "that of all which he [the Father] hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (Joh 6:39), and concerning whom He declared, "all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them" (Joh 17:10). Its entire membership comprises the mystical body of Christ.

But it may be asked, where in the Old Testament do we have any reference *to* the mystical body of Christ? Answer, in many passages, so numerous that we can scarcely mention more than a few of them here. Yet, ere turning to them, let it be pointed out that only an anointed eye is capable of discerning them. This does not mean that the interpretation we give to them is so far-fetched that only the credulous will receive it, nor that the passages themselves are so ambiguous that they are hard to be understood. No, rather does it mean that spirituality of mind is required in order to perceive their beauty and a comparison of the New Testament Scriptures with those of the Old is necessary so as to discover their hidden harmonies. As the principle we are now explaining is of such great importance in connection with our present study, let us point to a concrete example or illustration of it in the book of Acts.

“And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Act 9:4). Now an unspiritual reader would see in those words no reference whatever unto the mystical body (the Church) of Christ, nevertheless, it is unmistakably there. Saul of Tarsus thought he was righteously hounding a company of deluded fanatics and obstinate heretics, but he is now told that he was assaulting none other than the Lord of glory. But how could that be? Thus, there is such an intimate union existing between the Redeemer and the redeemed that what is done to the latter is done to the former. Christ and His people are *one*, for it is written that they are “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). Yea, “he that is *joined unto* the Lord is *one spirit*” (1Co 6:17).

Now the same vital relationship existing between the members of the body of Christ and their Head, which is explicitly taught in the New Testament, is with equal clearness implicitly revealed in the Old Testament. This living oneness which exists between the Lord and His people, causing Him to so absolutely identify Himself with them, that He declares when *they* are being persecuted, *He* is being persecuted, is brought out in many places. For example, in Isaiah 63:9 we read, “In all their affliction he was afflicted”—the reference is to the afflictions of Israel in Egypt. Just as when one member of the body is injured “all the members suffer with it” (1Co 12:26), so when the members of Jehovah’s body suffered in Egypt, their Head suffered too. We would beg the reader to give his prayerful and closest attention unto the passages which now follow.

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen 49:10). Here, we believe, was a prophecy that the Mediator should “gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (Joh 11:52). It expressed the same truth as is now made known in Ephesians 1:10, “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” The reference here is *not* to something which is yet to take place, but to that which *was* accomplished when God put all things under Christ’s feet, and gave Him “to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body” (Eph 1:22-23).

“And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of

Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more...and after that I will go out" (Exo 11:4-8). Though there *may be* room for an argument as to the grammatical structure of this passage and as to the antecedent of the personal pronoun, yet it is the writer's studied conviction that it was JEHOVAH Himself who here said, "I will go out." That is, JEHOVAH, as *one with* His people in their exodus. It was the Head absolutely identified with His body!

"The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with *me*" (Lev 25:23). A remarkable word indeed is this and one which has received far less notice than it deserves. How close is the parallel between it and such a verse as John 17:16, "They are not of the world, *even as* I am not of the world"! It reveals to us the infinite condescension of JEHOVAH and shows Him *identified with* His people. Beautiful is it to see how that David, centuries later, laid hold of this word and pleaded before God the *spiritual union* existing between them, "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am *a stranger with thee*, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were" (Psa 39:12).

"All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?" (Psa 35:10). Here is a verse which plainly gives the lie unto those who affirm that the "one Body" truth is quite unknown in the Old Testament. The Speaker in this verse is the Lord Jesus, as the next two verses unquestionably show. He speaks there as *the Head* of His body, which is the Church. He makes reference to His *mystical* "bones," that is, to the *members* of His mystical Body, compare Ephesians 5:30.

The 40th is another Psalm where the Holy Spirit clearly records the *oneness* of Christ and His people. That this is a Messianic Psalm we know from the Spirit's quotation of verses 6 and 7 in Hebrews 10. The first verse of it presents the suffering Saviour in Gethsemane. The second, shows us Christ delivered from the curse and brought forth on to resurrection ground. The third records His consequent praise, "He hath put a new song in *my* mouth, even praise unto *our* God." Notice, very carefully, dear reader, the remarkable variation in the number of the pronouns. How plainly does the change from the "my" to the "our" bring out the *spiritual union* of the Redeemer and the redeemed! The same precious truth comes out again in verse 5, "Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to *us-ward*." Christ's use there of the "us-ward" unequivocally reveals the Head and the members of His body as *one before God*.

"O God, thou knowest *my foolishness*; and *my sins* are not hid from thee" (Psa 69:5). This, as is well known, is another of the Messianic Psalms, several of its verses being directly applied to Christ in the New Testament. It depicts many of the sufferings and sorrows He endured in the days of His flesh, while serving as the Sponsor and Surety of His people. It shows us the depths of humiliation and shame into which He descended in order to bring His people nigh unto God. It reveals His *oneness with* His people in their place of guilt and condemnation. So absolute is the union (here) between the Head and the members of His mystical body, that He speaks of *their* folly and sins as *His*!

"His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be *blessed in him*: all nations shall call him blessed" (Psa 72:17). Observe well

that it is not (here) “blessed *by* him,” but “IN HIM.” It is exactly the same as what we find in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*.” In Psalm 87:7, we find David again declaring, “All my springs are *in thee*.” How greatly, then, do men err when they declare that “in Christ” truth is never found in the Old Testament.

“This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not” (Psa 81:5). What a remarkable statement is that! The speaker is none other than JEHOVAH, yet declares that the language of Egypt He “understood not.” There is only one way in which such a verse *can* be understood and that is by recognizing it was Christ speaking in the person of Israel—so *one with them* as to refer to their ignorance as His.

“O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and *look upon the face of thine anointed*” (Psa 84:8-9). What was this but the Psalmist asking the Father to hear Him *for Christ’s sake*! So too Daniel prayed, “Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, *for the Lord’s sake*” (Dan 9:17)! How these verses expose the ignorance and folly of those who affirm that the privileges enjoyed by the Old Testament saints were far inferior to ours, that they occupied a much lower spiritual plane.

Psalm 89:32-33. Those words occur in one of the great Messianic predictions. That Christ is here in view is plain from verse 27. Then, in the verses that follow, the Father speaks of Christ’s “seed” or “children.” But what we wish to particularly note is the remarkable change of pronouns in verses 32-33, which can *only* be accounted for on the ground that God was here speaking of the members of Christ’s body, as *one with their Head*, He declares that though He will visit *their* transgressions with the rod and *their* iniquity with stripes, nevertheless, “My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from *him*,” not “them,” though He is speaking of them! And mark well how this wonderful passages closes, “The faithful witness *in heaven*” (v. 37), and this in a book which is supposed to treat *only* of “an earthly people”!

“My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” (Psa 139:15-16). We will quote here from his “Treasury of David” a part of C. H. Spurgeon’s comments, “As the form of Eve grew spiritually in silence and secrecy under the fashioning hand of the Maker, so at this hour is the Bride being fashioned for the Lord Jesus, or to change the figure—a body is being prepared in which the life and glory of the indwelling Lord shall be displayed. The Lord knoweth them that are His. He has a specially familiar acquaintance with the members of the body of Christ. He sees their substance, unperfect though they be.”

“In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby HE shall be called, *THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jer 23:6). “In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith *She* shall be called, *The LORD our righteousness*” (Jer 33:16)! Here we have the Bridegroom and the Bride given *the same name*. Nothing could possibly bring out

more plainly the *oneness* of Christ and His people. Here we have in the Old Testament the mystical body, revealed as plainly as it is in the New Testament, where the Church is designated "Christ" (1Co 12:12). We here publicly challenge any man on earth to refute this affirmation.

In view of the many plain Scriptures above, what shall be thought of such statements as these, "the assembly, and its union with Christ, and adoption individually known, are the only things I am aware of *not revealed in the Old Testament*" (Synopsis vol. 2, p. 185 by J. N. Darby [1800-1882], the father of the "Plymouth Brethren"). "The revelation of this mystery, which was foretold, but not explained by Christ (Mat 16:18), was committed to Paul. In *his* writings *alone* we find the doctrine, position, walk, and duty of the Church" (Scofield Bible, under Eph 3:6)?

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR—PART 2

(Part 1 in August issue)

Ephesians 6:10-18

The second part or piece of the Christian's armour is mentioned in Ephesians 6:14, "And having on the breastplate of righteousness." First of all, notice the connecting "and," which intimates that there is a very close relation between the mind being girded with truth and the heart protected with the breastplate of righteousness. All of these seven pieces of armour are *not* so connected, but the "and" here between the first two denotes that they are inseparably united. Now, obviously, the breastplate of righteousness is that protection which we need for *the heart*. This verse is closely parallel to Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," understanding by the "heart" the affections and conscience.

As there was a double reference in the word "truth," first to the Word of God and second to sincerity of spirit, so I believe there is a double reference here in "the breastplate of *righteousness*." I think it refers both to that righteousness which Christ wrought out for us and that righteousness which the Spirit works in us—both the righteousness which is imputed and the righteousness which is imparted, which is what we need if we are to withstand the attacks of Satan. We might compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8, "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." I have been quite impressed of late in noting how frequently that word "sober" occurs in the epistles, either in its substantive or verbal form. Soberness is that which should characterize and identify the people of God. It is the opposite of that superficial flightiness, which is one of the outstanding marks of worldlings today. It is the opposite of levity and also of that feverish restlessness of the flesh, by which so many are intoxicated religiously and every other way. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." Here, of course, it has the secondary meaning of what is in view in Ephesians 6:14. It is the practical righteousness, like what we find in Revelation 19:8.

This second piece of armour, as I have said, is inseparably connected with the girdle of truth, for sincerity of mind and holiness of heart must go together. It is in vain we pretend to the former, if the latter be lacking. Where there is genuine sincerity of mind, there will be, and is, holiness of heart. To put on the breastplate of righteousness, means to maintain the power of holiness over our affections and conscience! A verse that helps us to understand this is Acts 24:16, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." There you have an illustration of a man taking unto himself, putting on the "breastplate of righteousness." Paul exercised himself to maintain a good conscience, both Godward and manward, and that requires daily diligence and persistent effort. Now the breastplate of righteousness is for withstanding Satan's temptations unto unholiness. The girdle of truth is to meet Satan's evil suggestions to defile the mind. The breastplate of righteousness is needed to foil his efforts to corrupt the affections or defile the conscience. Where there is not a conscience which reproaches us, then we soon fall victims to other attacks of the devil.

Passing on to the third piece of armour, "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15). This is perhaps the most difficult of the seven pieces of armour to understand and define, and yet, if we hold fast the first thought that the Holy Spirit is using a figure of speech here, that the reference is to that which is internal rather than external, spiritual rather than material, and also that He is following a logical order, there should not be much difficulty in ascertaining what is meant by the sandals of peace. Just as the girdle of truth has to do with the *mind*, the breastplate of righteousness with the *heart*, so the shoes for the feet are a figure of that which concerns the *will*. At first sight that may sound far-fetched and yet if we will think for a moment, it should be obvious that what the feet are to the body, the will is to the soul. The feet carry the body from place to place and the will is that which *directs* the activities of the soul. What the will decides, that is what we *do*.

Now the will is to be regulated by the peace of the Gospel. What is meant by that? This—in becoming reconciled to God and in having goodwill to our fellows, the Gospel is the means or instrument that God uses. We are told in Psalm 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." That means far more than they shall be ready to hearken to and believe the glad tidings of the Gospel. There is brought over into the Gospel, substantially, everything which was contained in both the moral and ceremonial Law. The Gospel is not only a message of good news, but a divine commandment and rule of conduct, "For the time is come that judgment must [not "shall"—now, not in the future!] begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1Pe 4:17). Yes, the Gospel is a rule to submit unto, a divine fiat which demands obedience, "your professed *subjection unto* the Gospel of Christ" (2Co 9:13). Those words are absolutely meaningless today in nine circles out of ten throughout Christendom, for the "Gospel" does not signify anything to them except "glad tidings"—there is nothing to be in "subjection to"! This is partly what I have in mind when saying there is carried over into and embodied in the Gospel the substance of everything which was found in the Law. Let me put it in another for—All the exhortations contained in the New Testament epistles are nothing more than explanations and applications of the Ten Commandments.

The Gospel requires us to deny ourselves, take up the cross daily, and follow Christ in the path of unreserved obedience to God. "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" signifies, with alacrity and readiness, response to God's revealed will. The *peace of* "the Gospel" comes from walking in subjection to its terms and by fulfilling the duties which it prescribes. Just so far as we are obedient to it, we experimentally enjoy its peace. Thus, this third piece of armour is for fortifying the will against Satan's temptations unto self-will and disobedience, and this, by subjection to the Gospel. Just as the feet are the members which convey the body from place to place, so the will directs the soul. And just as the feet must be adequately shod if we are to walk properly and comfortably, so the will must be brought into subjection unto the revealed will of God if we are to enjoy His peace.

Let there be that complete surrender daily, the dedicating of ourselves to God, and then we will be impervious unto Satan's attacks and temptations to disobedience. Just as the girdle of truth is to protect us from Satan's efforts to fill the mind with wandering thoughts and evil imaginations, just as the breastplate of righteousness is God's provision to protect us from Satan's efforts to corrupt our hearts and produce that which is unholy, so having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace means the will being brought into subjection to God and *that* protects us from Satan's temptation unto disobedience.

You will notice when we come to the fourth piece of armour, the "and" is lacking. The first three were joined together, for that which is denoted by those figurative terms is inseparably linked together—the mind, the heart, the will—there you have the complete inner man. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph 6:16). I think the words "above all" have a double force. First, literally understanding them as a preposition of place, meaning over-all, shielding as a canopy, protecting the mind, heart, and will. There must be faith in exercise, if those three parts of our inner being are to be guarded. Second, "above all" may be taken adverbially, signifying, chiefly, pre-eminently, supremely. It is *an essential* thing that you should take the shield of faith, for Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him." Yes, even if there were sincerity, love, and a pliable will, yet without faith we could not please Him. Therefore, "above all" take unto you the shield of faith.

Faith is all in all resisting temptations. We must be fully persuaded of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures if we are to be awed by their precepts and cheered by their encouragements. We will never heed properly the divine warnings or consolations, unless we have explicit confidence in their divine authorship. The whole victory is here ascribed to *faith* "above all." It is not by the breastplate, helmet, or sword, but by the shield of faith that we are enabled to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. It seems to be a general principle, in the Spirit's arrangement of things in Scripture, to put the most vital one in the center. We have seven pieces of armour and the shield of faith is the fourth! So in Hebrews 6:4-6, we have five things mentioned and in the middle is, "made partakers of the Holy Spirit."

Faith is the life of all the graces. If faith be not in exercise, love, hope, patience cannot be. Here we find faith is likened unto a "shield," because it is intended for the defense of the whole man. The shield of the soldier is something he grips, and raises or lowers as it is needed. It is for the protection of his entire person. Now the figure which the Holy Spirit

uses here, in connection with Satan's attacks, is taken from one of the devices of the ancients in their warfare, namely, the use of darts which had been dipped in tar and set on fire, in order to blind their foes. *That* is what lies behind the metaphor of "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." What is in view is Satan's efforts to prevent our looking upward! When those darts are in the air, the soldiers had to bow their heads to avoid them, holding their shields above. And Satan is seeking to prevent our looking upward.

The attacks of the devil are likened to "fiery darts," first, because of the *wrath* with which he shoots them. There is intense hatred in Satan against the child of God. Again, the very essence of his temptations is to *inflamm*e the passions and distress the conscience. He aims to enkindle covetousness, to excite worldly ambition, to ignite our lusts. In James 3:6, we read, "The tongue is set on fire of hell"—that means the devil's "fiery darts" have affected it. The third reason why his temptations are likened unto "fiery darts" is because of *the end* to which they lead if not quenched. Should Satan's temptations be followed out to the end, they would land us in the lake of fire. The figure of "darts" denotes that his temptations are swift, noiseless, dangerous.

Now taking the shield of faith means appropriating the Word and acting on it. The shield is to protect *the whole* person, wherever the attack be made, whether on spirit, or soul, or body. And there is that in the Word which is exactly suited unto each, but *faith* must lay hold of and employ it. Now in order to use the shield of faith effectually, the Word of Christ needs to dwell in us "richly" (Col 3:16). We must have right to hand a word which is pertinent for the particular temptation presented. For example, if tempted unto covetousness, I must use, "Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth" (Mat 6:19). When solicited by evil companions, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Pro 1:10). If tempted to harshness, "Be kindly affectioned one to another" (Rom 12:10). It is because the *details* of Scripture have so little place in our meditations that Satan trips us so frequently.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph 6:16). Like most of the other terms used, "faith" here also has a double signification. The faith which is to be our "shield" is both an objective and a subjective one. It has reference, first, to the Word of God without, the authority of which is ever binding upon me. It points, secondly, to my confidence in that Word, the heart going out in trustful expectation to the Author of it and counting upon its efficacy to repulse the devil.

"And take the helmet of salvation" (Eph 6:17). This is the fifth piece of the Christian's armour. First of all we may note the link between the fourth and fifth pieces as denoted by the word "and," for this helps us to define *what* the "helmet of salvation" is. It is *linked with faith*! Hebrews 11:1 tells us, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for," and if we compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8, we get a confirmation of that thought, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation." Here in Thessalonians, then, we have "hope" directly connected with "the helmet." Incidentally, this verse is one of many in the New Testament which puts salvation in the future, rather than in the past!—hope always looks forward, having to do with things to come, as Romans 8:25 tells us, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with

patience wait for it.” Now faith and hope are inseparable. They are one in birth and one in growth, and we may add, one in decay. If faith languishes, hope is listless.

By the helmet of salvation, then, I understand the heart’s expectation of the good things promised, a well-grounded assurance that God *will* make good to His people those things which His Word presents for future accomplishment. We might link up with this 1 John 3:3—scriptural hope *purifies*. It delivers from discontent and despair. It comforts the heart in the interval of waiting. Satan is unable to get a Christian to commit many of the grosser sins which are common in the world, so he attacks along other lines. Often he seeks to cast a cloud of gloom over the soul or produce anxiety about the future. Despondency is one of his favourite weapons, for he knows well that “the joy of the Lord” is our “strength” (Neh 8:10), hence his frequent efforts to dampen our spirits. To repulse these, we are to “take the helmet of salvation.” That is, we are to exercise *hope*.

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17). God has provided His people with an offensive weapon as well as defensive ones. At first sight that may seem to clash with what we said about Christians *not* being called upon to be aggressive against Satan, seeking to invade his territory and wrest it from him. But this verse does not clash to the slightest degree. 2 Corinthians 7:1 gives us the thought, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” *That* is the active, aggressive side of the Christian’s warfare. We are not only to resist our lusts, but to subdue and overcome them.

It is significant to note *how late* the “sword of the Spirit” is mentioned in this list. Some have thought that it should have come first, but it is not mentioned until the sixth. Why? I believe there is a twofold reason. First, because all the other graces that have been mentioned are necessary in order to make a right use of the Word. If there is not a sincere mind and a holy heart, we shall only handle the Word dishonestly. If there is not practical righteousness, then we shall only be handling the Word theoretically. If there is not faith and hope, we shall only misuse it. All the Christian graces that are figuratively contemplated under the other pieces of armour, must be in exercise *before* we can profitably handle the Word of God. Second, it teaches us that, even when the Christian has attained unto the highest point possible in this life, he still needs *the Word*. Even when he has upon him the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, his feet shod with the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and has taken unto himself the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, he still needs the Word!

The Word of God is here called “the sword of the Spirit” because He is the Author, the Interpreter, and the Applier of it. He is the only One that can give it power over us. We can handle the Word, meditate upon it, pray over it, and it has no effect upon us whatsoever, *unless the Spirit applies* His sword! If you think of this verse in the light of Christ’s temptation, you will find that He used that sword for self-defense in repulsing the assaults of the devil. He was *not* aggressively attacking him! And blessed, too, is it to mark that, as the dependent Man, He used that weapon in the power of “the Spirit.” See Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:14.

The last piece of armour is given in Ephesians 6 verse 18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” *Prayer* is that which alone gives us the necessary strength to

use the other pieces of armour! After the Christian has taken unto himself those six pieces, before he is thoroughly furnished to go forth unto battle and fitted for victory, he needs the help of his General. For this, the apostle bids us to pray “always” with all supplication of the Spirit. We are to fight upon our knees! Only prayer can keep alive the different spiritual graces which are figured by the various pieces of armour. “Praying always.” In *every* season—in times of joy as well as sorrow, in days of adversity as well as prosperity. Not only so, but “*watching thereunto* with all perseverance.” That is one of the essential elements in prevailing prayer—persistency. Watch yourself that you do not let up, become slack or discouraged. Keep on! The eighteenth verse is as though the apostle said, “Forget not to seek unto *the God of this ‘armour,’* and make humble supplication for His assistance, for only He who has given us these arms can enable us to make a successful use of them.” Some have called it the “all verse.” “Praying always with all prayer...with all perseverance and supplication *for all saints.*” Think not only of yourself, but also of your fellow-soldiers who are engaged in the same conflict!

Question, What does the twelfth verse mean? *Answer*, It does not refer to the sphere or place where the “wrestling” itself is done, but emphasizes the fact that the foes which attack the Christian are superhuman. We are not to interpret that verse by the language of earth’s geography. It does *not* say, “for *we* wrestle in high places against principalities and powers.” No, the high places are connected with those who attack the Christian and not with the place where the wrestling is done.

The above is a Bible reading, revised, given by the Editor to a little company in the home which God has kindly loaned us.

FURNACE CONDUCT

“Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires” (Isa 24:15). The context presents a fearfully solemn picture. It describes a time when the judgments of God are abroad. When He causes the earth to mourn and the world to languish. When His curse devours and maketh desolate. When all classes are alike made to smart from His rod. The merry-hearted do sigh, the joy of the harp ceaseth, the new wine mourneth, yea, we are told, “All joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone” (Isa 24:11). *Then it is* that this remarkable word is given to God’s people, “Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires.” It is true that conditions on earth today are not nearly so dreadful as those described in the first part of Isaiah 24, yet they *are* of such a character as to make this exhortation a timely one for many.

“Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires.” These are the words of *a godly remnant* who had been preserved in the midst of desolation. How few they were in number may be seen from verse 13. They are likened unto the handful of berries still on the boughs after the olive tree has been shaken and unto the odd grapes remaining on the vine after the vintage. Thank God there always has been a faithful remnant preserved by Him in the most evil times, for He will not leave Himself without a witness on the earth. This little remnant

is here seen triumphing, for it is said, "They shall lift up their voice, they shall *sing* for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea" (v. 14), that is, from amid the nations in a state of tumult.

Those who comprised this little remnant are here seen calling upon one another to delight themselves in the Lord, to rejoice amid their afflictions. Instead of giving vent to complainings and repinings, their word is, "Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires." It is easy to be thankful and happy in times of peace and plenty, but it is contrary to flesh and blood to sing songs in the furnace, yet *this* is what the saints are here enjoined to do! No matter what may be their circumstances, how scant their portion, how trying their lot, Christians ought to *glorify* the Lord in them. For what purpose does He leave us here upon earth, but to honour Him, to witness for Him, to *make manifest unto others* the sufficiency of His grace?

"Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires" (Isa 24:15). We shall not here attempt a strict exegesis of this verse, rather would we endeavour to make a practical application of it unto ourselves in these difficult days. At all times, in all cases, it is both the privilege and the duty of the Christian to "glorify" the Lord. He must not succumb to fear, but seek the Holy Spirit's strengthening of his faith. He is not to be the "victim of circumstances," but obtain grace to rise above and be victor over them. He is not to give way to abject despair like the poor worldling, but make it evident to those about him that the Lord *is* "a very present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1). "Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires." But *how* are we to do so?

1. *By honest self-judgment.* By which we mean, a frank acknowledgment that we fully deserve the chastening rod of God which is now upon us, owning with David, "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psa 119:75). God will not suffer His people to sin without rebuke (see Psa 89:30-32), and He is "glorified" when they candidly own His righteousness in correcting them. The cause of all affliction is sin and therefore God's justice must be acknowledged in His visitation upon it. He is grossly insulted if we say, "I know not why God should deal with me so hardly. I have been guilty of nothing which calls for such severe treatment"—that is the language either of rebellion or self-righteousness. Rather say with Micah, "I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him" (Mic 7:9).

If we are to "glorify the LORD in the fires" we must not only affirm the general truth that all His disciplinary dealings under providence are "right," but particular application must be made thereof, "In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." We must not only own the faithfulness of God when we are at ease, but under the sharpest chastisement. God's judgments do not come upon us at random, "*for this cause* many are weak and sickly" (1Co 11:30). Say, then, with Nehemiah, "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly" (Neh 9:33). Yea, own with Ezra, "Thou our God hast punished us *less* than our iniquities deserve" (Ezr 9:13). It is much for the honour of God that we have good thoughts of Him when under the rod and that we vindicate Him in all His ways with us.

2. *By not murmuring.* Why should we grumble when we *justly* suffer what we do? "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" (Lam 3:39). If we are now reaping as we sowed, then there is none to blame but our foolish and

wicked selves for sowing *what* we did. Therefore, to put it on the lowest ground, we act irrationally when we sulk and growl under God's rod. Of Hannah we read that "she was in bitterness of soul," yes, but observe what follows, "*and* prayed unto the LORD" (1Sa 1:10). Instead of allowing her trouble to drive her from the Lord, it cast her back the more upon Him. To murmur is only to tempt the Lord to smite us yet more sharply! What did the children of Israel gain by their murmurings in the wilderness? Nothing, only they were made to smart for it.

Certainly we do not "glorify the LORD in the fires" by chafing and repining against His disciplinary dealings with us. O to say with David, "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress" (Psa 17:3). We are kept from uttering much that is grievously dishonouring to God when we rigorously muzzle our mouths. For a Christian to murmur against God's providential dealings is for him to deny His justice, impugn His wisdom, and call into question His love—sins of the deepest dye are these! Remember that things might be much worse. God has not cast us into the everlasting burnings—then why resemble, in any degree, those who gnash their teeth against Him? Let us not forget the Word declares, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (Jam 1:26).

3. *By not fainting.* This is the other extreme which a suffering saint needs to guard against. When God's grace subdues our hearts from rising up in rebellion against the One who is righteously smiting us, there is ever a real danger of our spirits sinking into a state of despondency. Therefore does our loving Father say, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, *nor faint* when thou art rebuked of him" (Heb 12:5). Certainly the Lord is not glorified by us in the fires if we give way to a spirit of gloomy despair. Rather are we to diligently seek the supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit that we may heed that exhortation, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psa 27:14).

It is a great support to the Christian's heart to remember that the chastening rod is wielded by *love* (Heb 12:6), and that God is as much our Father when He frowns as when He smiles, when He whips as when He embraces. God's strokes do not make void His promises, nor do they retract His pardon. Tribulation and trouble are no proofs of God's disfavour, but tokens of His faithfulness. Therefore instead of doubting His goodness, we should return thanks for His discipline. The "all things" of Romans 8:28 as surely include the cloud and shadows, as the showers and sunshine. Yea, the immediate context treats directly of sufferings and sorrows! Then doubt not God's mercy, repine not at His providences, faint not under His rod. All will be well at the last.

4. *By exercising faith.* God's purpose in leading Israel "through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought," was that He might "humble" them, "prove" them, and do them "good at their latter end" (Deu 8:15-16). God has promised to support His people under their trials (Deu 33:27), to bring them safely through their afflictions (Isa 41:10), to turn all things to their advantage (Rom 8:28), and to "perfect" that which concerneth them (Psa 138:8). Then say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). God disposes all things for the eternal welfare of His people. Do you answer, "But I am greatly afraid that I have provoked the Lord to leave

me to myself." Even so, that word still stands good, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1Jo 1:9).

We greatly glorify the Lord in the fires when we seek and obtain from the Holy Spirit that strengthening of faith which enables us to trust God "with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding (Pro 3:5). Faith may be likened unto a lifebelt. It is of little or no value unless it supports its possessor in the deep and dark waters. Faith does not make us impervious unto the chilliness of the waters or to change the figure, it does not make the furnace any cooler or more pleasant, but it *does* enable its favoured possessor to say with Job, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1Pe 5:10).

5. *By perfect endurance.* "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (Jam 5:10). The final words of that verse mean far more than the prophets meekly tolerated their sufferings. They signify that they also continued steadily in the path of duty. Now that so many are out of secular employment, they have more time for reading, meditation, and prayer, and unless they are giving themselves regularly unto these spiritual exercises, they are lamentably failing to heed that exhortation, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16). No matter how dark the outlook may appear to carnal reason, the Christian ought to ever say, "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more" (Psa 71:14).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (Jam 1:12). To "endure" trials or temptations is to bear them patiently and with constancy go through all difficulties in the way of duty. The word "tried" here signifies *approved* as in Romans 14:18, 1 Corinthians 11:19. There must be testings to make evident the integrity of our profession and to make manifest the genuineness of our graces. Thus there is a *needs-be* for the furnace (cf. 1Pe 1:7). Then let us seek grace to heed that word, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luk 21:19).

6. *By thanksgiving and praise.* "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 5:20). Be thankful things are not worse. Be thankful that if the Lord be our shepherd we *shall not* "want" (Psa 23:1). Be thankful that our trials are only for a comparatively brief moment, whereas the sufferings of the wicked will last for all eternity. "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:" (Rom 5:3-4). But what is there *in* "tribulations" which can afford ground for "glorifying"? This—they furnish an opportunity for faith, hope, love, to be exercised. They supply occasion for God to manifest His unchanging faithfulness. They bring *spiritual* blessing to the soul.

We recently received a letter which touchingly illustrated this sixth point. While on the foreign field, a missionary's wife was taken ill and ordered back. On arriving home, she was operated upon to find a terrible cancer in an advanced stage, the doctors pronouncing "No hope." Her stricken husband wrote, "This was a terrible announcement to me at first, but the Lord has given grace to bear it, and I trust that I shall be able to sincerely say—not that I put up with His will, but that I rejoice in it"!

7. *By cheerfulness.* God is greatly glorified when His people preserve a bright countenance before the world and by their demeanour give evidence that *they* have a source of peace and joy which others are strangers to. *This* is something which speaks much more forcibly than any sermons we preach with our lips! “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16). Yes, we may honour or dishonour God by the very expressions on our faces! Ponder the principle enunciated in Matthew 7:17-18, “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” “They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed” (Psa 34:5).

