

**Volume 21—Studies in the Scriptures—December, 1942**  
**PERSONAL OWNING OF GOD.**

“Ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deut. 32:3). Having considered the application of this unto the nation, let us ponder its varied implication unto the individual believer. We begin by drawing an inference—if greatness is to be ascribed unto God, then obviously it is to be withheld from the creature. The Lord God alone is truly great and therefore no worm of the earth is entitled to the least share in the honour of that mighty attribute. Did not the Lord Jesus emphasize this truth when addressing the rich young man? “Good Master,” he said to Him because he regarded Christ only as an excellent human Teacher. Christ replied, “There is none good *but one*, that is, God” (Matt. 19:17). So there is none great but one—the Almighty. “To God only wise, be glory” (Rom. 16:27): there is none wise but one—the omniscient Lord. O what arrogance to arrogate unto ourselves that which pertains alone unto Deity!

Ours is supremely an age of bombast and impiety. Man is inflated by a sense of his own importance. One vies with another in seeking the homage of his fellows. From motives of self interest or from a spirit of sycophancy many are willing to fawn upon some creature who is but of yesterday and flatter him by calling him “great” and giving to him the most imposing titles. Nor is this evil confined to the commercial and political world. How nauseating the arrogant titles assumed by Papist priests, and how horrible the blasphemy of their dupes found in worship before the arch-priest of Italy! Nor is this evil spirit of placing ecclesiastical dignitaries on a pedestal and rendering homage to them by any means absent from “Protestant” circles. Much need is there, then, in this day to press the exhortation, “Ascribe ye greatness unto our God” and to Him alone, for He will not share His glory with another. Let us point out some of the ways in which this may be done.

*By worshipping Him decorously.* By this we do not mean that costly buildings must be erected or that they need to be richly furnished and an elaborate and imposing ritual instituted. No, that were to ascribe littleness to God, as though He could be attracted by outward show and pleased with the baubles which amuse children. “The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48), for “the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee” (1 Kings 8:27). “God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24): that is, from the heart, in sincerity: it is the homage of the soul He requires. “The LORD is great, and greatly to be praised” (Psa. 96:4): but the very fact He is so high above us requires that we take our place in the dust at His feet. “O come let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our Maker” (Psa. 95:6). Let us in deep humility yet fervent gratitude adore Him and return thanks for all His manifold mercies. “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all about Him” (Psa. 89:7).

*By trembling at His Word.* It is much to be thankful for, if by grace we receive that Word for what it actually is, namely, a Divine revelation. Yea, it is cause for deep gratitude if we accept the Holy Scriptures not as cunningly devised fables nor even as the product of good and wise men but as the living oracles of Jehovah—as an inerrant communication of His heart, His mind and His will to us. If we *truly* believe God’s Word, we shall stand in awe of it, for it is “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). The Word of Truth contains not good advice which we may accept or refuse as we feel disposed, but the mandates of the Almighty which we ignore

at our peril. Yea, which we refuse to our certain and eternal undoing. The Scriptures come unto us clothed with all the authority of the King of kings and therefore implicit obedience to their precepts is demanded of us. Said the Lord Jesus, "The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). It is therefore the part of wisdom to measure ourselves by it and conform to its requirements. O that we may be among those who "tremble at God's Word" (Isa. 66:2).

*By counting on His power.* We profess to believe that He is the Almighty, yet no sooner are we in straits, faced with obstacles and brought to our wit's end, than we act as though God were as feeble and helpless as ourselves. No circumstances can baffle Him who is clothed with might, no situation defy the Maker and Sustainer of the universe. He has but to speak and it is done, to command and it standeth fast (Psa. 33:9). But alas, unbelief darkens the mind and beclouds the vision so that we are no longer able to see the absolute sufficiency of Him with whom we have to do. Caleb and Joshua ascribed greatness unto their God when they said to the unbelieving nation "the LORD is with us: fear them not" (Num. 14:9)—with their eyes on Him the Canaanite giants and walled cities dismayed them not! When in a tight place look for the Lord to show Himself strong on your behalf; when you are come to the end of your own resources, count on Elijah's God working miracles for you; when Satan tempts you to doubt, say, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

*By relying on His goodness.* The greatness of God consists not only of the majesty of His being and the infinitude of His power, but also in that He is the sum of all moral and spiritual excellence. "Thou art good, and doest good" (Psa. 119:68): nothing must be allowed to cast doubt upon that grand fact. The Divine goodness is God's acting kindly and benevolently, ministering to our welfare. Assurance thereof enables the believer to declare, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up" (Psa. 27:10). God is "abundant in goodness" (Exo. 34:6), and unlike that of man's, which is often "as a morning cloud and as the early dew (which) goeth away" (Hosea 6:4), it "endureth continually" (Psa. 52:1). An unshaken confidence in God's goodness lies at the foundation of our trust, love and hope in Him. In the darkest hour we may count our blessings and know that all things are being made to work together for our good. "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble" (Nahum 1:7). O that we may be among those who "delight themselves in His great goodness" (Neh. 9:25).

*By honouring His mercy.* God is "plenteous in mercy" (Psa. 103:8). "Thy mercy is great above the heavens" (Psa. 108:4). Nor is it of brief duration: "His mercy is everlasting" (Psa. 100:5). These are most precious statements and faith needs to be mixed with them when the soul is overwhelmed by a sense of guilt. If the believer has fallen by the wayside and is horrified and in anguish at so foully defiling his garments, unbelief will say his case is hopeless. If he has transgressed against light and warnings, perverted privileges, and disgraced the cause of Christ, Satan will tell him his iniquities are too great to be pardoned. But Satan lies. Then is the time to ascribe greatness unto God by honouring His mercy. This is what David said: "O LORD, pardon mine iniquity, *for* it is *great*" (Psa. 25:11). So far from belittling his sin, he acknowledged the enormity of it and pressed it as the urgency of his case—like one saying, Give me food, *for* I am starving. Do you feel as though you are full of sin? remember Christ is "full of grace" (John 1:14). Plead Isaiah 1:18. Limit not the great God, but trust in the abundance of His mercy.

*By reckoning on His faithfulness.* Did you not begin by coming to a great Saviour, though you felt yourself to be the vilest of the vile? Did He turn you away? Nor will He now if you cast yourself at His feet. "But I have abused His goodness, misused His mercies and sinned more grievously than in my unregenerate days—what hope can there be for me?" you ask. What hope?—this: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)." But my trouble," says another, "is the matter of temporal supplies: my health is gone, my loved ones are dead, old age and starvation stare me in the face." Ah, but He who has cared for you thus long will not suffer you to sink at the last—"His compassions fail not . . . great is Thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22, 23). "Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst, deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered; they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded" (Psa. 22:4, 5). The godly in former ages committed themselves to God in their trials, and He did not put them to confusion—and this should encourage us. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee" (Psa. 55:22). "He is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23).

*By taking refuge in His immutability.* The Lord is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Here is a stable rock on which to rest amid the changing billows of the sea of life. What awful alterations we are now witnessing in the world. Peace has given place to war, order to chaos, happiness to misery. The homes of millions cruelly broken up, the plans and prospects of countless young lives rudely shattered, kingdoms overthrown, the most stable and ancient institutions are now in the melting pot. But none of this has affected *God*: it will never have to be said of Him that He began to build and was unable to finish. He is still on the throne "working all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). It is this which enables faith to say, "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Psa. 46:2). It is this which assures the believer that no matter how he may waver or professing Christians apostatize, he shall not perish: "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6). It is this which causes the Christian to rely on the Divine promises: the knowledge that with God "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).—A.W.P.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

### 25. *False Prophets*: Matthew 7:15.

It may appear to some of our readers that last month's article had no connection at all with Matthew 7:15, that instead of giving an exposition of the verse we wandered off to an entirely different subject and entered into a lot of technicalities which few are capable of understanding. Then let us remind such that we gave an exposition of Matthew 7:15 in the October issue, at the close of which we asserted that it is particularly in the matter of the relation of good works unto salvation that the false prophets fatally deceive souls: one school or class of them teaching that salvation *is by* works, another insisting it is entirely *without* works. The issue thus raised is such an important and vital one that it would be wrong to dismiss it with a few peremptory statements. Moreover, there is now such confusion of tongues in the religious realm and the method followed by even the orthodox pulpit is so dreadfully superficial—"preaching" having quite supplanted *teaching*—the Lord's own people are in real need of instruction thereon, and such instruction demands diligence and study on the part of the one imparting and concentration and patience from those who would receive it. Truth has to be "bought" (Prov. 23:23).

In last month's article we sought to define and explain the relation of good works to salvation. First, we pointed out that they possess no meritorious value: by which we mean they deserve nothing at the hands of God, that in no sense do they earn anything or contribute one mite to our redemption. Second, we insisted that they are necessary, yea, that without them salvation cannot be obtained. Not that any well-doing on our part is required in order to obtain acceptance with God, nor that they can atone for the failures and sins of the past. But rather that the path of obedience must be trod if the realm of unclouded bliss is to be reached. The doing of good works is indispensable in order to the securing of full and final salvation, that is, in order to an actual entrance into Heaven itself. We are well aware that such language will have a strange sound to some of our friends, that it will savour of "legality," yet if Scripture itself expressly declares that Christ is "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* Him" (Heb. 5:9), need we hesitate to employ the same plain language and press the force thereof?

That which we are here advancing is no departure from genuine orthodoxy but the doctrine propounded by the soundest of God's servants in days gone by. Last month we quoted from Goodwin and Manton. Hear now the testimonies of other Puritans. "If we consider every gracious work of patience, love, meekness, we shall see blessedness is promised to them. Not that they justify, only the justified person cannot be without them. They are the ordained mean in the use whereof we arrive at eternal life. It is faith only that receives Christ in His righteousness, yet this faith cannot be separated from an holy walk" (A. Burgess, 1656). "Freedom from condemnation, from sin, for all the elect, which God Himself so plainly asserts (Rom. 8:32, 33) doth not in the least set thee free from *the necessity of obedience*, nor free thee from contracting the guilt of sin upon the least irregularity or disobedience" (John Owen, 1670). "Christ will save none but those who are brought to resign themselves sincerely to the obedience of His royal authority and laws" (Walter Marshall, 1692). Alas, that there has been so widespread a departure from the teaching of such worthies!

It is just because there has been such a grievous turning away from the Truth as it was formerly so faithfully and fearlessly proclaimed by men not worthy to blacken their

shoes, that so many today are ignorant of the very first principles of Christianity. It is because the pulpit, platform, and pamphlet hucksters of the nineteenth century so wantonly lowered the standard of Divine holiness and so adulterated the Gospel in order to make it palatable to the carnal mind that it has become necessary to labour what is really self-evident. O the tragedy of it that at this late day we should have to write article after article in the endeavour to purge some of God's people of the Antinomian poison they have imbibed! As well may writer and reader hope to reach Heaven without Christ as without good works: "Whosoever doth not *bear* his cross, and *come* after Me, cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). Did the Lord Jesus work so arduously that His followers might be carried to glory on flowery beds of ease? Was the Saviour so active that His disciples might be idle? Did He become obedient unto death in order to exempt us from obedience?

Though it will retard our pace, yet because it is necessary to remove stumbling stones out of the way of those anxious to be helped, we must seek to resolve two or three difficulties which may arise in the minds of the Lord's people. 1. It is likely to be objected that by such teachings we are making man in part at least his own Saviour. But need we be afraid to go as far as the language of Holy Writ goes? Was the Apostle legalistic when he cried, "*Save yourselves* from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40)? Was the chief of the Apostles derogating from the glory of Christ and the grace of God when he bade Timothy, "take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine, continue therein: for in doing this thou shalt both *save thyself* and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). But was not Timothy already a saved man when thus exhorted? Regenerated and justified, yes: fully sanctified and glorified, no. Because we press the perseverance of the Christian (as well as his Divine preservation) do we make him his own keeper? Suppose we do, are we going beyond Scripture? Did not David say, "By the word of Thy lips *I have kept one* from the paths of the destroyer" (Psa. 17:4)? Did not Paul say, "*I keep under* my body" (1 Cor. 9:27). Does not Jude exhort us, "keep yourselves in the love of God" (v. 21)?

It is against a *dishonest one-sidedness* we so often protest in these pages. The singling out of certain passages and then closing the eyes against others has wrought untold damage. "Is there any doctrine which you almost think is a truth but your friends do not believe it and they might perhaps think you heretical if you were to accept it—and therefore you dare not investigate any further? O dear friends, let us be rid of all such dishonesty. So much of it has got into the church that many will not see things that are as plain as a pikestaff. They will not see, for truth might cost them too dear. They cover up and hide away some parts of Scripture which it might be awkward for them to understand, because of their connection with a church or their standing in a certain circle." If C. H. Spurgeon found it necessary to raise his voice against this reprehensible method of picking and choosing from the Word of God, how much more so is such a condemnation called for in this generation of dishonesty and hypocrisy?

2. If good works is necessary in order to salvation is not this putting us back again under the Covenant of Works, the terms of which were, "Do this and thou shalt live"? No indeed, nevertheless the fact must not be lost sight of that it has pleased God in all ages to deal with His people by way of covenant and in the same way He will deal with them to the end of the world. It is very largely because *Covenant teaching* has been given no place in modern "evangelism" that so much ignorance now obtains. How few preachers today could explain the meaning of "these are the two covenants" (Gal. 4:24). What

percentage of Christians now living understand the “better covenant” of which Christ is “the Mediator” (Heb. 8:6) and wherein lies the difference between the “new covenant” (Heb. 12:24) and the old one? How few apprehend the blessedness of those words “The blood of the Everlasting Covenant” (Heb. 13:20). But let it not be overlooked that there are covenant *duties* as well as covenant blessings: there is a covenant for us to “make” with God (Psa. 50:5) and a covenant to “keep” (Psa. 25:10; 103:18).

The new covenant or Covenant of Grace was in its original constitution transacted between God and Christ as the Head of His people. That covenant is published in the Gospel, and the application of its benefits is made when we submit to its terms and fulfill its duties. It is worthy of note that the selfsame thing which the Apostle calls the “Gospel” in Galatians 3:8, he terms the “Covenant” in verse 17. Now a covenant is a compact or contract entered into by two or more parties, the one engaging himself to do or give something upon the fulfillment of a stipulation agreed upon by the other. Thus in the Gospel Christ makes known His readiness to save those who are willing to submit to His Lordship. Hence conversion is termed, “the love of thine espousals” (Jer. 2:2), when the soul, as it were, signed the marriage contract, vowing to love none other than the Lord and to be faithful to Him unto death. This giving of ourselves to Christ to serve and love Him is designated a “taking hold of the covenant” (Isa. 56:6). And that covenant must be *kept* if we are to receive its benefits.

When defining the essence of the controversy between himself and his opponents, John Flavel stated it thus: “The only question between us is, Whether in the new covenant some acts of ours (though they have no merit in them, nor can be done in our own strength) be not required to be performed by us antecedently to (before) a blessing or privilege, consequent by virtue of a promise? and whether such act or duty, being of a suspending nature to the blessing promised, it have not the true and proper nature of a Gospel *condition*.” Mr. Flavel affirmed, his opponent (Mr. Carey) denied. In proof of the conditionality of certain of the new covenant blessings Mr. F. said, “We know not how to express those sacred particles, ‘that if,’ ‘if,’ ‘except,’ ‘only,’ and such like (Rom. 10:9; Matt. 18:3; Mark 11:26; Rom. 11:22; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:6, 14) which are frequently used to limit and restrain the benefits and privileges of the new covenant, by any other word so fit and so full as the word *conditional*.”

In considering the New and Better covenant we must distinguish sharply between the first sanction of it in Christ and the *application* of its benefits to His people. Few men more magnified the grace of God in his preaching and writings than did the Puritan Thomas Boston, yet we find him saying (in his “View of the covenant of grace”), “He gives the rewards of the covenant in the course of *their obedience*. He puts His people to work and labour: but not to work in the fire for vanity as the slaves of sin do. They are to labour like the ox treading out the corn, which was not to be muzzled, but to have access at once to work and to eat. The service now done to Zion’s King hath a reward in this life as well as a reward in the life to come. By the *order of* the covenant there is privilege established to follow duty as the reward thereof, the which order is observed by the King in His administration. Accordingly He proposeth the privilege of comfort to excite to the duty of mourning (Matt. 5:4), the special tokens of Heaven’s favour to excite unto a holy tender walk (John 14:21); in like manner to excite to the same holy obedience He proposeth the full reward in the life to come (1 Cor. 9:24; Rev. 3:21).”

The New Covenant requires obedience as really and truly as did the old and therefore does God write the laws of the covenant on the hearts of those with whom He makes the new covenant (Heb. 10:16). Those who enter into this covenant with God do approve of the whole Divine Law so far as they know it, declaring, "I esteem all Thy precepts" (Psa. 119:128). They have an inclination of heart towards the whole of God's Law so far as they know it, saying, "I love Thy commandments above gold" (119:127). They heartily engage to conform to the whole of God's Law so far as they know it, exclaiming, "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes" (119:5). Where the Law is written on a person's heart he will write it out again in his conversation. Their souls lie open to what of God's Law they as yet know not, praying, "make me to understand the way of Thy precepts" (Psa. 119:27).

But now if many (we say not all) of the blessings and benefits of the New Covenant are made conditional upon our obedience and fidelity, wherein does it differ from the old, or Adamic Covenant, the Covenant of Works? Why, in these respects. First, under the old covenant, works were meritorious, entitling to the inheritance: had Adam kept the Law, he and all he represented would have entered life by legal right—whereas under the New Covenant Christ purchased the inheritance for His people before a single thing was asked of them. Second, under the old covenant man had to work in his own strength alone; but under the new, all-sufficient grace and enablement is available to those who duly seek it. Third, under the Covenant of Works no provision was made for failure: the obedience required must be perfect and perpetual (Gal. 3:10): whereas under the Covenant of Grace God accepts imperfect obedience, if it be sincere, because the blood of Christ has made atonement for its defects and disobedience is pardoned when we truly repent of and forsake the same.

3. If good works are necessary in order to final salvation, how is a poor soul to ascertain when he has done sufficient of them? Such a question is not likely to issue from a renewed heart, rather does he bemoan his unfruitfulness and unprofitableness. He feels he can never do enough to express his gratitude unto God for the unspeakable gift of His Son. Instead of begrudging any sacrifice he is called upon to make or any hardship to encounter by virtue of his being a Christian, he deems it the highest honour conceivable to serve such a Master and endure for His sake. But to the carping objector, we would say, Scripture declares, "For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast *unto the end*" (Heb. 3:14). The soldiers of Christ are not granted any furloughs or "leave" in this life: they cannot take off their armour until the battle is over. They know not at what hour their Lord may come, and therefore are they required to have their loins girded and their lamps trimmed without intermission.

But it should be pointed out that it is not quantity but *quality* which God requires. A cup of cold water given to one of His little ones in the name of Christ is infinitely more acceptable to the Father than a million pounds donated by a godless magnate to social institutions. On the one hand it is written, "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15), on the other, "man looketh on the outward appearance but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). That which issues from love to God, which expresses gratitude for His goodness, is what is well-pleasing in His sight. Quality not quantity. Is not this the point in that saying of Christ's, "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove" (Matt. 17:20)? What is smaller than a

mustard seed and what larger than a mountain? the one seemingly feeble and paltry, the other ponderous and mighty. Ah, but the former is a *living* thing, the latter but a mass of inert matter; the former is energetic and growing, the latter stationary. It is quality versus quantity.

4. If good works are necessary in order to final salvation is there not ground thereon for boasting? Yes if they be perfect and flawless, performed in our own strength, and we bring God into our debt thereby. Before giving the negative answer, consider the case of the holy angels in this connection. When Satan fell he dragged down with him one third of the celestial hierarchy, the remainder remained steadfast in their loyalty to God: did such fidelity puff them up? Throughout their entire history it is always said of them that they “do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psa. 103:20). Nowhere in Holy Writ is there so much as a hint that they are proud of their obedience. On the contrary we find them veiling their faces in the Divine Presence and crying one unto another, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6:3), and falling before the throne on their faces and worshipping God (Rev. 7:11). How much less, then, may Hell-deserving sinners, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, find anything in their own performances to afford *self* congratulation?

Is there any danger that the doing of good works in order to final salvation will lead to boasting? No, none whatever if we bear in mind that our best performances are but filthy rags in the sight of Him with whom the very heavens are not clean. No, not if we bear in mind that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think a godly *thought* (2 Cor. 3:5), still less carry it out into execution; apart from Christ we can “do nothing.” No, not if we squarely face and honestly answer the question, “what hast thou that thou didst not receive”? (1 Cor. 4:7). No, not if we heed that word of Christ’s, “so likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you (which none of us ever did), say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10). Yes, “unprofitable servants” so far as making God our Debtor is concerned. The very man who laboured more than any for his Master declared, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15:10).

Again the reader may be inclined to ask, But what bearing has all of this on Matthew 7:15? we answer, Much every way, as we shall (D.V.) seek to show next month. Suffice it now to say that what we have been stressing in this and the preceding article is expressly repudiated by the “false prophets” of our day. They blankly deny that good works have any part or place whatever in our salvation, that *believing* the Gospel is all that is needed to ensure Heaven for any sinner.—A.W.P.



## THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

### 36. *His Exit.*

After Elijah's interview with king Ahaziah we read no more of him till we come to the closing scene of his earthly career but from the hints conveyed by the Divine record in 2 Kings 2 we gather that his last days here were not idle ones. If not engaged in anything spectacular and dramatic, he was employed in doing what was good and useful. It would seem that both he and Elisha not only instructed the people in private but also founded and superintended seminaries or schools of the Prophets in various parts of the land. By training them to read and teach the Word of God those young men were prepared for the ministry and to carry on the work of reformation in Israel, and therein the Prophets were well employed. Such sacred activity, though less striking to the senses, was of far greater importance for the effect produced by witnessing supernatural wonders—though stirring at the time, soon wears away—whereas the Truth received in the soul abides forever. The time spent by Christ in training the Apostles produced more lasting fruit than the prodigies He performed in the presence of the multitudes.

Elijah had now almost finished his course. The time of his departure was at hand. How, then, does he occupy his last hours? What does he do in anticipation of the great change impending? Does he shut himself up in a cloister that he may not be disturbed by the world? Does he retire to his chamber that he may devote his last moments to devout meditation and fervent supplication, making his peace with God and preparing to meet his judge? No indeed, he had made his peace with God many years before and had lived in blessed communion with Him day after day. As for getting ready to meet his Judge, he had not been so mad as to postpone that all-important task till the last. He had, by Divine grace, spent his life in walking with God, in performing His bidding, in trusting in His mercy and in experiencing His favour. Such a man is always getting ready for the great change. It is only the foolish virgins that are without oil when the Bridegroom comes. It is only the worldling and ungodly who put off preparation for eternity till their last moments.

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19): out of the ground was man's body taken and because of sin, unto the ground it shall revert. Well nigh six thousand years have passed since that sentence was denounced against the fallen race and Enoch had been the only person who was exempted from it. Why he, rather than Noah, Abraham or Samuel should have been so honoured we know not, for the Most High does not always deign to give a reason in explanation of His conduct. He ever does as He pleases and the exercise of sovereignty marks all His ways. In the saving of souls—exempting sinners from merited condemnation and conferring unmerited blessings—He divides "to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:11), and none can say to Him, Nay. Thus it is in connection with those whom He spares from the grave. Another was now on the point of being transported bodily to Heaven but why such peculiar honour should be conferred upon Elijah rather than any other of the Prophets we cannot say and it is idle to speculate.

"And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into Heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal" (2 Kings 2:1). That the Prophet had received previous notification of the Lord's gracious intention to give him a supernatural exit from this world appears by his conduct, going from place to place by Divine direction. "Gilgal" marked the starting point of his final journey and most suitably so. It

had been the first stopping place of Israel after they crossed the Jordan and entered the land of Canaan (Josh. 4:19). It was there the children of Israel pitched their camp and set up the tabernacle. It was there they had “kept the Passover” and “did eat of the old corn of the land” instead of the manna on which they had so long been miraculously fed” (Josh. 5:10-12). “And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee, for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel” (2 Kings 2:2). Various conjectures have been made as to why Elijah would have Elisha now part company with him—that he wished to be alone, that modesty and humility would hide from human eyes the great honour to be bestowed upon him, that he would spare his companion the grief of final departure, that he would test the strength of Elisha’s attachment and faith—we incline to this last.

“And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel” (v. 2). When first called by Elijah he had declared, “I will follow thee” (1 Kings 19:20). Did he really mean it? would he cleave to the Prophet unto the end? Elijah tried his faith, to determine whether his avowal was actuated by a fleeting impulse or if it were a steadfast resolution. Elisha had meant what he said, and refused now to forsake his master when given the opportunity to do so. He was deter-

mined to have the benefit of the Prophet’s company and instruction as long as he could and clave to him probably in hope of receiving his parting blessing. “So they went down to Bethel,” which means “the house of God.” This was another place of hallowed memory, for it was the spot where Jehovah had first appeared unto Jacob and given him the vision of the mystic ladder. Here the “sons of the Prophets” at the local school came and informed Elisha that the Lord would remove his master that very day. He told them he knew that already, and made them hold their peace (2 Kings 2:3), for they were intruding.

“And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho” (v. 4). As the Saviour “made as though He would have gone further” (Luke 24:28) when putting to the proof the affection of His disciples on the way to Emmaus, so the Prophet told his companion to “tarry ye here” at Bethel—the place of such sacred memories. But as the two disciples had “constrained” Christ to abide with them, nothing could tempt Elisha to forsake his master. “So they came to Jericho,” which was on the border of the land from which Elijah was departing. And the sons of the Prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha and said unto him, “Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head today? and he answered Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace” (2 Kings 2:5). The force of this seems to be: What is the use of clinging so tenaciously to your master? he will be taken from you on the morrow, why not stay here with us? But like the great Apostle at a later date, Elisha “conferred not with flesh and blood” but adhered to his resolution. O that like grace may be granted both writer and reader when tempted to follow not the Lord fully!

“And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan” (2 Kings 2:6). Much ground had now been covered. Was Elisha tiring of the journey or would he continue to the end? How many run well for awhile and then grow weary of well-doing. Not so Elisha. “And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on” (v. 6). How that reminds us of Ruth’s decision: when Naomi bade her, “return thou after thy sister-in-law,” she replied, “Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee: for whither thou

goest I will go and whither thou lodgest I will lodge” (Ruth 1:16). And Elijah and Elisha went on leaving the school of the Prophets behind them. The young believer must not suffer even happy fellowship with the saints to come in between his own individual communion with the Lord. How richly Elisha was rewarded for his fidelity and constancy we shall see in the sequel.

“And fifty men of the sons of the Prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan” (2 Kings 2:7). Probably because they expected to witness Elijah’s translation into Heaven, a favour, however, which was granted only to Elisha. Nevertheless they were permitted to witness a remarkable miracle: the dividing asunder of the waters of Jordan so that the Prophet and his companion passed over dry shod. How the *sovereignty of God* is displayed everywhere! The multitudes witnessed Christ’s miracle of multiplying the loaves and the fishes but not even all of the twelve beheld His transfiguration on the mount. It had pleased God to make these young Prophets acquainted with the supernatural exit of His servant from this world, yet they were not permitted to be actual spectators of the same. Why we know not, but the fact remains and from it we should take instruction. It illustrated a principle which is revealed on every page of Holy Writ and is exemplified all through history—that God makes distinction not only between man and man but also between His saints—between one of His servants and another, distributing His favours as pleases Him. And when any dare to challenge His high sovereignty, His answer is, “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own?” (Matt. 20:15).

“And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground” (2 Kings 2:8). This dividing of the Jordan was a fitting prelude to the Prophet’s rapture on high. As Matthew Henry pointed out, it was “the preface to Elijah’s translation into the heavenly Canaan, as it had been to the entrance of Israel into the earthly Canaan” (Josh. 3:15-17). Elijah and his companion might have crossed the river by ferry, as other passengers did, but the Lord had determined to magnify His servant in his exit from the land, as He had Joshua in his entrance thereto. It was with his *rod* Moses had divided the sea (Exo. 14:16), here it was with his *mantle* Elijah divided the river—each the insignia or badge of his distinctive office. That there is a deeper meaning and broader application to this remarkable incident scarcely admits of a doubt. The “Jordan” is the well-known figure of death: Elijah is here a type of Christ—as Elisha is to be regarded as representative of all who cleave to and follow Him. Thus we learn that a safe and comfortable way through death has been provided for His people by the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee” (2 kings 2:9). Here is proof that Elijah had been *testing* his companion when he had bade him “tarry” at the previous stopping-places, for certainly he had not offered such an invitation as this had he been contravening his express desire. The Prophet was so pleased with Elisha’s affection and attendance that he determined to reward him with some parting blessing. And what a testing of his character was this, “Ask what I shall do for thee”! One of the Puritans has called attention to the significance of Elijah’s “*before I be taken from thee*” for it had been useless for Elisha to invoke his master afterward. He was *not to be prayed unto* as a “mediator of intercession” as deluded Papists blasphemously teach concerning saints and angels. Christ is the only one in Heaven who intercedes for God’s people on earth. How

attentively we need to read the language of Holy Writ: that single word “before” gives the lie to one of the cardinal errors of Rome!

“And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (v. 9). Here was his noble answer to Elijah’s, “what shall I do for thee?” Rising above both the lusts and sentiments of the flesh, he asked not anything nature might have coveted but that which was spiritual, seeking not his own aggrandizement but the glory of God. We do not think he asked for something superior to what his master had enjoyed but a portion “double” that which was communicated to the other Prophets. He was to take Elijah’s place on the stage of publication: he was to be the leader of “the sons of the Prophets” (as v. 15 intimates), and therefore he wished to be equipped for his mission. Rightly did he “covet earnestly the best gifts”: he asked for a double portion of the spirit of prophecy—of wisdom and grace, of faith and strength—that he might be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

“And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing” (v. 10). Elisha had asked not for riches or glory, wisdom or power, but for a double portion of the spirit that rested on and wrought through his master. In terming it “a hard thing” Elijah appears to have emphasized the great value of such a bestowment: it was as though he said, That is much for you to expect. We regard Matthew Henry’s comment as a pertinent one: “those are best prepared for spiritual blessings that are most sensible of their worth and their own unworthiness to receive.” Elisha felt his own weakness and utter insignificance for such a work as that to which he was called and therefore he desired to be qualified for his eminent office. “Nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so” (v. 10). This is very blessed: his request would be granted and he was to know it by the sign mentioned: a sight of Elijah’s translation would be the proof that his request was agreeable to the will of God and a pledge of his desire being gratified; but in order thereto his eye must continue *fixed upon* his master! Chronologists reckon that the ministry of Elisha lasted twice the length of his predecessor and apparently he wrought double the number of miracles.

The grand moment had arrived. Elijah had fully discharged the commission God had given him. He had preserved his garments from being spotted by the apostate religious world. Now his conflict was over, his course run, his victory won. He had no home or resting place here, so had pressed onward to his heavenly rest. “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind unto Heaven” (v. 11). It is to be carefully noted that God did not send His chariot for Elijah while he was in Samaria. No, the land of Israel was polluted and Ichabod was written over it. It was on the far side of Jordan, in the place of separation, that this signal honour was conferred upon the Prophet. As the souls of the saints are convoyed to Paradise by the angels (Luke 16:22) so we believe it was by celestial beings, the highest among them, that Elijah was taken to Heaven. “Seraphim” signifies “fiery” and God is said to make His angels “a flaming fire” (Psa. 104:4), while, “cherubim” are called “the chariots of God” (Psa. 68:17, and cf. Zech. 6:1). “Elijah was to remove to the world of angels, and so angels were sent to conduct him hither” (Matthew Henry) that he might ride in state and triumph to the skies like a conqueror.

In the translation of Elijah we have clear testimony to the fact that there is a reward for the righteous. Often this appears to be flatly contradicted by the experiences of this

life. We behold the wicked flourishing like the green bay tree, while the child of God has a bare temporal subsistence—but it shall not always be thus. Elijah had peculiarly honoured God in a day of almost universal apostasy and now God was pleased to highly honour him. As he had taught men at the constant hazard of his life the knowledge of the only true God, so He would now teach them by his being taken alive into Heaven that there is a future state, that there is a world beyond the skies into which the righteous are admitted where they shall henceforth dwell with God and all the angelic hosts in glory everlasting! Future bliss shall infinitely compensate present sacrifices and sufferings: he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Elijah's supernatural exit from this world also demonstrated the fact that the human body is capable of immortality! It could not witness to the truth of resurrection, for he never died; but his corporeal removal to Heaven furnished indubitable evidence that the body is capable of being immortalized and of living in celestial conditions.

In Elijah's translation we see how much better are God's ways than ours. In an hour of despondency the Prophet had wanted to leave this world before God's time had come for him to do so and by a way far inferior to that which He had appointed: under the juniper tree he had requested that he might die, saying, "It is enough: now, O LORD, take away my life" (1 Kings 19:4). Had he been granted his desire, how much he had lost! How much better to be taken away than by death in a fit of impatience! And this is recorded for our instruction, pointing as it does a lesson we all need take to heart. It is the part of wisdom to leave ourselves and all our affairs in God's gracious hands trusting Him fully and being willing for Him to use His own measures and methods with us. We are certain to sustain serious loss if we determine to have our own way: "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls" (Psa. 106:15). The mature Christian will assure his younger brethren that today he thanks God for refusing the answers he once craved. God denies your request now because He has ordained something better for you.

In the translation of Elijah we have both a pledge and a type of the supernatural exit from this world which *every* child of God experiences. In the course of this series of articles we have pointed out again and again that though in certain respects the character and career of Elijah was an extraordinary one, yet in its broad outlines he is to be regarded as a representative saint. Thus it was in connection with the final event. No ordinary departure from this world was his and vastly different from the common end to earthly existence experienced by the wicked is that of the righteous. Death as the wages of sin has been abolished for the redeemed. For them physical dissolution is but the body being put to sleep: as for the soul, it is convoyed by angels into God's immediate Presence (Luke 16:22), which is certainly a supernatural experience. Nor shall all God's people even "sleep" (1 Cor. 15:51). That generation of them alive on the earth at the return of the Saviour shall have their bodies "changed," that they may be "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21) and shall be caught up together with the resurrected saints to "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). Thus a supernatural exit from this world is assured all the ransomed hosts of God!—A.W.P.

## DOCTRINE OF SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE.

### 5. *Its Springs.*

11. *The love of Christ.* Ah, what pen is capable of expatiating upon such a theme when even the chief of the Apostles was obliged to own that it "passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19). Such was His wondrous love that in order to save His people, the Son of God left Heaven for earth, laid aside the robes of His glory and took upon Him the form of a Servant. Such was His wondrous love that He voluntarily became the homeless Stranger here, having not where to lay His head. Such was His wondrous love that He shrank not from being despised and rejected of men, suffering Himself to be spat upon, buffeted and His hair plucked out. Yea, such was His wondrous love for His Church that He endured the Cross, where He was made a curse for her, where the wrath of a sin-hating God was poured upon Him, so that for a season He was actually abandoned by Him. Truly His love is "strong as death . . . many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it" (Song. 8:6, 7).

Mark how that love was tried and proved by the unkind response it met with from the most favoured of His disciples. So little did they lay to heart His solemn announcement that as He was about to be delivered into the hands of men and be slain by them, they "disputed among themselves who should be the greatest" (Mark 9:31, 34). When the awful cup of woe was presented to Him in Gethsemane and His agony was so intense that He sweat great drops of blood the Apostles were unable to watch with Him for a single hour. When His enemies, accompanied by a great rabble armed with swords and staves, came to arrest Him, "all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (Matt. 26:56)—and had writer and reader been in their place we had done the same. Did such base ingratitude freeze the Saviour's affection for them and cause Him to abandon their cause? No indeed: "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *unto the end*" (John 13:1)—to the end of their unworthiness and unappreciativeness.

Ah my reader, His people are the objects of Christ's *everlasting* love. Before ever the earth was, His delights were with them (Prov. 8:31) and have continued ever since. As the Father has loved Christ Himself, so Christ loves His people (John 15:9)—with a love that is infinite, immutable, eternal. Nothing can separate us from it (Rom. 8:35). Those whom He loves are the special portion and inheritance given to Him by the Father and will He lose His portion when it is in His power to keep it? No, He will not: "they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels" (Mal. 3:17). When they were given to Him by the Father it was with the express charge, "that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39), and therefore do we find Him saying to the Father, "those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost but (not "except") the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12), and he was a devil from the beginning.

Consider well the various *relations* which believers sustain to Christ. They are the mystical Body of which He is the Head: "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). They are "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23) and thus He would be incomplete, mutilated, if one of them perished. They are laid upon Him as a "foundation" that is "sure" (Isa. 28:16), built upon Him as a "rock" against which "the gates of Hell shall not prevail" (Matt. 16:18). They are His "redeemed," bought with a price, purchased at the cost of His life's blood—then how must He regard them! Consider well the terms of endearment used of them. Christians are "of the travail of His

soul” (Isa. 53:11). They are His “brethren” (Rom. 8:29), His “fellows” (Psa. 45:7), His “wife” (Rev. 19:7). They are set as a seal upon His heart (Song. 8:6), engraved in the palms of His hands (Isa. 49:16). They are His “crown of glory” and “royal diadem” (Isa. 62:3). Since they are so precious in His sight He will not suffer one to perish.

12. *The gift of the Holy Spirit.* In contemplating the Person and work of the Spirit in the economy of redemption we must view Him in connection with the Everlasting Covenant and the mediation of Christ. The descent of the Spirit is inseparably related to what has been before us in the previous sections. When the Saviour ascended on high He “received gifts for men, ye, for the rebellious also” (Psa. 68:18), and as His exaltation was in reward for His triumphant undertaking, so also were those “gifts,” the chief of which was the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). As Christ is the unspeakable gift of the Father unto us, so the Holy Spirit is the supreme gift of Christ to His people. Since Christ is Man as well as God, it is required of Him that He make request for whatever He receives at the hands of the Father: “Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen (the Gentiles) for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession” (Psa. 2:8). “I will *pray* the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16).

The redemptive work of Christ merited the Spirit for His people. The Spirit was given to Christ in consequence of His having so superlatively glorified God on the earth and in answer to His intercession. It is due to His praying that the Holy Spirit not only renews the regenerate day by day but that He first brought them from death unto life. This is intimated in the “for the rebellious also” of Psalm 68:18—even while they were in a state of alienation from God. The dispensing of the Spirit is in the hands of the exalted Christ, therefore is He spoken of as, “He that *hath* the seven Spirits of God” (Rev. 3:1)—the Holy Spirit in the fullness or plenitude of His gifts. To His immediate care is now committed the elect of God. As Christ preserved them during the day of His earthly sojourn (John 17:12), so the Spirit safeguards them while He is on high. This is clearly intimated in John 14:3 where the Lord Jesus declares, “I will come again and receive (not “take”) you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also”—they will be handed *back to Him* by the blessed Spirit.

13. *The indwelling of the Spirit.* The Holy Spirit was purchased for His people by the oblation of Christ and is bestowed upon them through His intercession, to abide with them forever. The manner in which He abides with those on whom He is bestowed is by a gracious indwelling. “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (that is, that we might have conferred upon us the legal status of sonship). And because ye are sons (by virtue of legal oneness with the Son), God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Gal. 4:4-6). What a marvellous yet mysterious thing this is: that the third Person of the Trinity should take up His abode within fallen creatures! It is not merely that the influences or graces of the Spirit are communicated to us, but that He Himself dwells within us: not in our minds (though they are illumined by Him) but in our hearts—the center of our beings, from which are “the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

This was the grand promise of God in the Covenant: “I will put My Spirit within you.” (Ezek. 36:27 and cf. 37:14), the fulfillment of which our Surety obtained for us—“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” (Acts 2:33), for the dispensing of Him is now in

the hands of Christ as we have pointed out. Thus it is that the inhabitation of the Spirit is the distinguishing mark of the regenerate: "But ye are not in the flesh (as to your legal standing before God ) but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). It is the indwelling of the Spirit of God which identifies the Christian, and thus He is called "the Spirit of Christ" because He occupies the believer with Christ and conforms him to His image. The apprehension of this wondrous fact exerts a sobering influence upon the believer, causing him to "possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." "What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

Now the Spirit takes up His residence in the saints not for a season only but never to leave them. "This is My covenant with them, saith the LORD (unto the Redeemer, see v. 19), My Spirit that is upon Thee and My word which I have put in Thy mouth shall not depart out of Thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and *forever*" (Isa. 59:21). That was a solemn promise of the Father unto the Mediator that the Spirit should continue forever with the Redeemer and the redeemed. The blessed Spirit comes not as a transient Visitor but as a permanent Guest of the soul: "And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you *forever*" (John 14:16). Since, then, the Spirit takes up His abode in the renewed soul forever, how certain it is that he will be preserved from apostasy. This will be the more evident from our next division, when it will appear that the Spirit is a powerful, active and sanctifying Agent within the Christian.

14. *The operations of the Spirit.* These are summed up in, "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it" (Phil. 1:6). The reference is to our regeneration, completed in our sanctification, preservation and glorification. First He imparts spiritual life to one who is dead in trespasses and sins and then He sustains and maintains that life by nourishing it and calling it forth into exercise and act so that it becomes fruitful and abounds in good works. Every growth of spirituality is the work of the Holy Spirit: as the green blade was His so is the ripening corn. The increase of life, as much as the beginning thereof, must still come by the gracious power of the Spirit of God. We never have more life, or even know we need more or groan after it, except as He works in us to desire and agonize after it. Were the Spirit totally withdrawn from the Christian he would soon lapse back into spiritual death. But thank God there is no possibility of any such dire calamity: every born-again soul has the infallible guarantee, "the LORD will perfect that which concerneth me" (Psa. 138:8).

Let us now consider more particularly some eminent acts of the Spirit in the believer and effects of His grace exercised in them. He empowers and moves them unto obedience: "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and ye shall keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36:27). The two things are inseparable: an indwelling Spirit and holy conduct from those indwelt. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). The Spirit guides into the paths of righteousness by a blessed combination of invincible power and gentle suasion: not forcing us against our wills but sweetly constraining us. He directs the activities of the Christian by enlightening his understanding, warming his affections, stimulating his holy inclinations and moving his will to do that which is pleasing unto God. In this way is that Divine promise fulfilled, "I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which



leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isa. 48:17), and thus is his prayer answered "Order my steps in Thy Word" (Psa. 119:133).

By His gracious indwelling the Spirit affords the saints *support*: "likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Rom. 8:26). If the believer were left to himself he would never see (by faith) the all-wise hand of God in his afflictions, still less would his heart ever honestly say concerning them, "Thy will be done." If left to himself the believer would never seek grace to patiently endure chastisement, still less cherish the hope that afterward it would "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). No, rather would he chafe and kick like "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke" (Jer. 31:18) and yield to the vile temptation to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). If the believer were left to himself he would never have the assurance that his worse sufferings were among the all things which work together for his ultimate good, still less would he "glory in his infirmity that the power of Christ might rest upon him" (2 Cor. 12:9). No, such holy exercises of heart are not the products of fallen human nature: instead they are the immediate, gracious, lovely fruits of the Spirit, brought forth in such uncongenial soil.

By His gracious indwelling the Spirit *energizes* the believer: "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). This is manifested in many directions. How often He exerts upon the believer a restraining influence, subduing the lusts of the flesh and holding him back from a course of folly by causing a solemn awe to fall upon him: "the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil," and the Spirit is the Author of that holy fear. "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep *by* the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1:14)—He is the one who oils the wheels of the saint's obedience. "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5:5), otherwise the deferring of our hope would cause the soul to utterly pine away. Hence we find the Spouse praying to the Spirit for invigoration and fructification, "Awake O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon My garden that the spices thereof may flow out" (Song. 4:16).

The graces which the indwelling Spirit produces are durable and lasting, particularly the three cardinal ones: "now *abideth* faith, hope, love" (1 Cor. 13:13). *Faith* is that grace which is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth" (1 Peter 1:7)—it is its imperishability which constitutes its superior excellence. It is "of the operation of God" (Col. 2:12) and we know that whatsoever is of Him "it shall be forever" (Eccl. 3:14), Christ praying that it "fail not," and therefore no matter how severely it shall be tested its possessor can declare, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). The *hope* of the Christian is "as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast," for it is cast on Christ the foundation, from whence it can never be removed (Heb. 6:18, 19). As to the believer's *love*, though its initial ardour may be cooled yet it cannot be quenched, though first love may be "little" it cannot be lost. Under the darkest times Christ is still the object of his love, as the cases of the Church in Song of Solomon 3:1-3 and of Peter (John 21:17) evidence.

15. *The relations which the Holy Spirit sustains to the Christian.* In Ephesians 1:14 He is designated "the *earnest* of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22). Now an "earnest" is part-payment assuring the full reward in due season: it is more than a pledge, being an actual portion and token of that which is promised. If the inheritance were precarious, suspended on conditions of uncertain performance, the Spirit could not in truth or propriety be termed the earnest thereof. If an

“earnest” is a guaranty among men, much more so between God and His people. He is also “the firstfruits” of glorification unto the believer (Rom. 8:23), an antepast of Heaven, the initial beams of the rising sun of eternal bliss in the Christian’s soul. He is also the “*anointing*” which we have received from Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 1:21) and this “abideth” in us (1 John 2:17). Again, He is the believer’s seal: “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30), that is, until their bodies are delivered from the grave. Among other purposes a “seal” is to secure: can then the treasure which the Spirit guards be lost? No: as Christ was “sealed” (John 6:27) and in consequence “upheld” by the Spirit so that He failed not (Isa. 42:1, 4), so is the believer. It is *impossible* for any saint to perish.—A.W.P.

### CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION.

In 1 Corinthians 15 the Apostle also points out that in the wise arrangement of the Creator everything in nature, whether celestial or terrestrial, has a “glory”—beauty and excellence adapted to the sphere in which it is designed to move and in harmony with the purpose it is made to serve: “there is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars” (v. 41). Thus the change effected in resurrection includes also our investiture with glory and honour meet for the place we are to occupy. A man shining in heavenly glory would be very much out of place in a world of sin and misery; and in like manner the Christian in a body of corruption would be most unseemly for the courts above. The Divine wisdom which has fitted everything for its sphere and made everything beautiful in its place and season will invest those ordained to occupy the highest places of creation with suitable glory: that which is sown in dishonour and weakness shall be raised in glory and power.

“As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (v. 49). The life of Christ has already been communicated to the believer’s soul but it is obscured and hindered in a natural body; but the Christian will possess the likeness as well as the life of Christ (Psa. 17:15). Men speak of a “sound mind in a sound body”: yet there is no such thing today, but in the resurrection morning there will be more than that—the mind of Christ in a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. That is redemption completed. Only when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality will “death be swallowed up in victory.” Whether we look at what has taken place in the Person of Christ the Head, or at our relation to Him and the life we derive from Him at the new birth—whether we consider our fellowship with Christ and what is necessary in order to our entering into His glory and sharing the blessedness of His exaltation—it is evident that the resurrection of believers is a necessity in the nature of the case.

But it is equally evident that what has just been said above applies only to believers. The resurrection of unbelievers rests upon another ground entirely, is of a very different nature, and is ordained for a vastly different end. That their resurrection is certain we know: “*all* that are in the graves shall come forth” (John 5:29). The power of Christ shall raise them. Yet it will not be by virtue of union to Him but because of His dominion over them, that He may be vindicated in their judgment. They have not His spirit of life within them and therefore there will be no change from corruption to incorruption, from dishonour to glory; rather shall they awake “to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2)—with features that are hideous and repulsive. Nor is there the slightest hope of amelioration: their doom is irrecoverable, they come forth “unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29). Their bodies will be “fitted to destruction” (Rom. 9:22), capacitated to endure *eternal torment*.

Let us return to the resurrection of the believer. There has been considerable difference of opinion concerning the resemblance between the Christian’s present body and his future one. Instead of canvassing the rival views we shall express what we believe the Scriptures to teach thereon. Many we believe have been misled by the term “spiritual body,” as though it signified something intangible and ethereal but that would deny its connection and identity with the first body and instead of being a “resurrection” would involve a *creation*. Moreover, it clashes with the language of our risen Saviour who said to the eleven, “handle Me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye

see Me have" (Luke 24:39)—observe that it is Luke, "the beloved physician," who records this anatomy beyond the tomb. Equally explicit is the Prophet's detailed analysis of what resurrection is: "I will lay sinews upon you (the naked "bones"), and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin" (Ezek. 37:6)—it is all one whether the Prophet be referring to a bodily, spiritual, or symbolical (national restoration) resurrection, for the Holy Spirit would not mislead by employing strained or false figures of speech.

The Christian's body in Heaven will be the same as he has now, the same as was laid in the grave unless the Lord returns before then, only a body characterized by glory and fitted for the celestial realm, yet preserving its identity with the old one. "We shall rise again with the same bodies we have now as to the substance, but the *quality* will be different" (Calvin). The word "raised" would be meaningless unless it be the same body restored and transformed. Christ has redeemed the bodies of His people as well as their souls (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:20). That such a resurrection requires a miracle is granted, but Christians believe in a miracle-working God, nor does the supposed "flux of particles" in the human body present any difficulty to Omniscience. Lazarus had gone to corruption, yet he was raised. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that *GOD* should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8). The omnipotence which originated the body can certainly re-originate it!

Let us now ponder what is said of the resurrection body in 1 Corinthians 15. 1. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption." Over the resurrection body the curse shall have no power and as there will be no more death there will be none of the disorders which lead thereto. The present body is subject to diseases in endless variety but not so the future one. It will contain no element or germ of disease and will not be subject to decay. Its bloom will never fade, its faculties will never weaken, its members never tire. It will be perfectly holy and therefore in the enjoyment of perfect health. Immortal youth will characterize it: "They are equal unto the angels . . . being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36). Though the angels were created before Adam, yet never once in Scripture are they represented as aged but rather as men in their prime (Mark 16:5). Adam was created not as an infant or a young child, for that had not represented perfect humanity, but probably as one of thirty, for that is the age of man's prime (Luke 3:23) and it is likely we shall appear and forever continue thus.

2. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory" (1 Cor. 15:43). The body which is laid in the grave was the habitat and instrument of a depraved soul. It was polluted by evil lusts and disgraced by carnal passions. Its hands performed unholy deeds: its feet trod forbidden paths: its ears listened to ungodly sounds: its eyes beheld vanity. Every member was defiled. It will be the very opposite with the resurrection body: all its faculties will be fully consecrated unto God and devoted to His service. How loathsome the body becomes when disease and death seize upon it. What is more revolting than a putrefying carcass? But the one that is raised is glorious! The saints shall be clothed with a body of surpassing beauty and symmetry. It will be a resplendent body, luminous and reflective: "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun" (Matt. 13:43), "The difference between the unsightly seed and the beautiful flower, or that between the loathsome caterpillar and the beautiful winged insect into which it is transformed is but an imperfect figure of the difference that shall exist between the bodies of the saints laid in the grave and those with which they shall be clothed in the period of resurrection" (J. Brown).

3. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power" (1 Cor. 15:43). The present life of man is but a battle of self-preservation. All his toil is for procuring the things necessary to maintain his existence but at the end he has to mutely confess his own impotence. All flesh is as grass and its glory as the flower of the field. Helpless when he enters the world, weakness is stamped upon man. Bodily exertion soon wearies the muscles and stiffens the joints, prolonged mental exercise produces brain fatigue. Good resolutions are formed and high ideals cherished but we lack the moral power to carry them into execution: the spirit is willing but the flesh weak. But when awakened from the dust of earth we shall no more be subject to infirmities and never suffer from fatigue. Our bodies will be instinct with unflagging energy fitted for a state of uninterrupted exertion.

4. It is "a spiritual body." All that is connoted by those words it is probably impossible to grasp in our present state. As intimated last month we understand them to signify, generally, that as the life of Christ is communicated at regeneration to the soul, so at resurrection a body is given suited to be the abode of one who is freed from all sin and fitted for the celestial realm and its occupations. More specifically, we understand a "spiritual body" to signify, first, one which is delivered from the restrictions of the present one—not subject to the law of gravity, never in need of sleep. Second, one that is endued with sublimated senses and additional faculties. Third, one that is in more immediate union with and fully controlled by the Holy Spirit, quickening and forever sustaining it without the assistance of any natural or animal means. It will be substantially physical, but functionally spiritual.

5. It is "heavenly" in its capacities and destiny. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:48, 49). There is an identity of kind between the stem and its branches. The "earthy" is Adam (see v. 47), "they that are earthy," his descendants: the "heavenly," is Christ, "they also that are heavenly" are His risen people. As the progeny of Adam had borne his image both in soul and body (Gen. 5:3), so the redeemed receive both a holy nature and body from Christ. That the Sanctifier and the sanctified are "all of one" (Heb. 2:11) is a truth on which the Holy Spirit now nourishes the faith of believers. They are as He is, even now in promise; they will be so, in fact, when He returns to claim them for His own. An illustration of the difference between an earthy and heavenly body is seen in the case of the angel in Judges 6:21 who apparently ascended in the flame: he had a tangible body, yet not subject to fire. The same is beheld again in the mysterious fourth form by the side of the three Hebrews in Babylon's furnace: material and visible, yet indestructible.

6. "This mortal shall put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:54). It is necessary that a radical change shall take place either by dying and being raised or being changed without seeing death, for we cannot enter Heaven as we are. Our present mortality is incapable of sustaining the light and glory, the revelations and enjoyments of the celestial state. Manifestations of the Divine glory have produced painful effects upon the bodily frame of those to whom they were made. Daniel, after one of his visions "fainted and was sick certain days" (8:27); and on another occasion he declared, "there remained no more strength in me" (10:17). Habakkuk said, "when I heard, my belly trembled and my lips quivered at the voice" (3:16). When the Apostles beheld their transfigured Lord they "fell on their faces and were sore afraid and became heavy with sleep." But in that Day mortality shall

be “swallowed up of life” (2 Cor. 5:4) and then shall we be capacitated to dwell with “the Prince of Life.”

7. To complete the picture presented in 1 Corinthians 15 we must add, “We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:20, 21). Here is redemption completed: here is salvation consummated: here is our “glorification.” The resurrection body of Christ was able to pass through closed doors. When Saul of Tarsus beheld it, he was blind for three days. And Christ is “the *First fruits* of them that sleep”—both the pledge and pattern of the coming harvest. This same transformation will also be effected in those of His which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17). The “like unto” of Philippians 3:21 denotes perfect resemblance but not absolute equality, for in all things must the Lord of glory have the pre-eminence—as He was anointed with the oil of gladness “above His fellows” (Psa. 45:7), so is He exalted with a greater glory. We shall be “like Him” (1 John 3:2): with a brightness and beauty similar, though not on a par with His, shall the bodies of His people be adorned.

In conclusion we would direct attention to a point which has almost, if not entirely, escaped notice, as is evident from the language universally obtaining among the Lord’s people. Four times over in 1 Corinthians 15 occur the words “it is raised” and we would naturally suppose the correlative term would be “it is buried.” Instead, we read “it is *sown* . . . it is raised.” The writer has been deeply impressed by the fact that never once after the Sin-bearer was laid in the tomb is any of His people said to be “buried,” save only in connection with their being “buried with Him by baptism unto death” (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), which is not exceptional but confirmatory. “Burial” is done with the object of getting finally rid of a repulsive object; but “sowing” is with a view to a future appearing! The bodies of Christians are “sown” in the cemeteries and not “buried!” “Deep down in the bowels of the earth, by a process no mortal knows, charcoal turns to diamond: the substance is the same, yet beyond comprehension different: the charcoal has been swallowed up of diamond. The softest of minerals becomes the hardest, most durable, most valuable metal known. So also is the resurrection of the dead” (D. M. Panton).—A.W.P.

### OUR ANNUAL LETTER.

“Feed My sheep” (John 21:16). To preach the Gospel unto the lost and to indoctrinate the saved is the principal task assigned the servant of Christ. No matter in which part of the earth he resides or what is the character of the times in which he lives his duty is clearly defined. The supplanting of peace by war changes not his commission one iota. Even though he should be in an enemy-occupied country, while life and a measure of liberty remains, the Lord holds him to his charge. However much disorganized things may be, however much the attention of the masses may be absorbed by current events, God’s order to His ministers remains the same: “thou shalt speak My words unto them whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear” (Ezek. 2:7). However numbers may dwindle, however small the visible flock may become, “feed My sheep” is the Divine command, and woe be unto those pastors who disregard it

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to *feed* the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). “*Feed* the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2). Never was it more needful and urgent for those pastors who are according to God’s heart to “feed” (His people) with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15). Why so? Because we are living in days when to a great and grave extent there is “a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11). The churches have apostatized and those who still attend them are, for the most part, being fed “on ashes” (Isa. 44:20), yea “on wind” (Hosea 12:1). There is nothing for the regenerate, nothing but what grieves and nauseates them. Nor are the religious publications of the day any better: with scarcely an exception they contain nothing which will nourish faith or stimulate unto practical godliness.

“Feed My sheep.” It is because we desire to heed this injunction that our little monthly messenger is still being sent forth. We are not engaged in a commercial undertaking: we have no ambition to contribute anything to any “new order”: but we do covet the holy privilege of ministering to the spiritual needs of some of those for whom Christ died. And it is this longing which shapes our policy and regulates our message. Some may think well to set before their readers sensational items culled from the newspapers under the attractive title of “Signs of the Times,” and others may fill their pages with evidences of the alarming spread of Romanism, the great increase of Jesuits in high places and the power of the Papacy in directing much that is now taking place in the world. It is not our province to judge those who have such a penchant but we may point out there is *no food* for the souls of God’s children in such fare and therefore we must decline to revert unto such things.

With very, very rare exceptions the “sheep” are not being fed today, no not even in those places which wish to be regarded as centers of orthodoxy. It is much to be feared that many of those now occupying such pulpits devote far too much of their attention to the goats. And even where that is not the case, the mere preaching of “sermons” is not sufficient to supply the deficiency. There must be *teaching*, a systematic opening up of the Scriptures, if the sheep are to be FED. One of the principal causes which contributed so much to the deplorable situation now confronting us was the ignoring of the fundamental law that those whom God calls to the ministry are men “apt to *teach*” (1 Tim. 2:7). Students for the ministry may have pleasing personalities, they may acquire academical honours, they may even be truly regenerate but unless they have received

from God the specific gift for *teaching*, they will never be qualified to feed the flock of Christ—as the history of Christendom plainly evidences. If a lawyer adopted the sermonizing method at the bar, he would soon be without any practice.

We would therefore press this word, “Feed My sheep,” upon our brethren in the ministry as well as upon ourself. Despite a decreased circulation these “Studies” are still being sent to scores of preachers and we sincerely trust none of them are among those faithless shepherds against whom the Lord brings the solemn charge, “ye feed not the flock” (Ezek: 34:8). If souls are to be built up in the faith and have a well-rounded Christian character they require a regular consecutive exposition of the Word in the order God has thought proper to give it to us: only then will every subject be treated in the right proportion. What teacher of history would think of giving an eloquent oration of thirty or forty minutes on a sentence here and there in his text book! Why then adopt such a silly plan with the Word of God? No congregation can ever become well instructed in Divine things by merely listening to sermons with a text for their motto. True, it will require far more labour on the part of the minister to take up a book of the Bible and expound and make application of it *verse by verse*, but with God’s blessing those to whom he ministers will be proportionately enriched.

What has just been pointed out in the last paragraph illustrates the fact that these pages are designed for different classes among God’s people, for under-shepherds as well as sheep. Some of our readers have been reared among hyper-Calvinists, where a bald fatalism was taught and if they are to be helped we have to labour what is quite obvious to others. Many have sat under Arminianism and need a different aspect of the Truth from the former. Still others are as yet only seekers after Christ and they must not be overlooked. We therefore ask our friends to have patience with us when they meet with an article which scarcely fits *their* case. It is also to be noted that before Christ bade Peter “feed My sheep” (John 21:16, 17), He gave commandment “feed *My lambs*” (v. 15), thereby intimating that the first duty of the pastor is to care for the feeblest of the flock. Let not, then, the more mature despise that which is intended for the babes in Christ. What wisdom is needed, what help from above, if each is to have his portion and receive “a word in season”! Yet what wondrous variety God has provided that the needs of all may be supplied.

Variety marks all the works of God. It has been said that “Order is Heaven’s first law,” to which we might add *diversity* is a close second. What almost endless variety there is in every department of creation, so that not even two blades of grass are exactly alike. What dissimilarity there is in the workings of Divine Providence, so that no two lives are ordered the same. What sovereignty is displayed in the operations of Divine grace: in conversion, in gifts, in growth. The same is true of Holy Writ. There is milk for the babes, strong meat for the full-grown, medicine for the sick. There is no excuse for any preacher to bore either his hearers or readers because of sameness and monotony. The Gospel harp has many strings to it. How many different subjects are dealt with in the Sermon on the Mount! We have ever sought to observe this principle and thereby preserve the balance between the Law and the Gospel, doctrine and deportment, precept and promise, the historical and the typical.

The editor of these pages has been very highly favoured. From the beginning he has been graciously provided with those who have ceased not to hold up his hands. All through the years, in distant parts of the earth, there have been those who pray daily that



we might be Divinely preserved from all error and enabled to break the Bread of Life to those who hunger for it. Not only has the knowledge of this sustained us amid trials and discouragements but it is in answer to such supplications that the sower has been so freely supplied with Seed. Many of those who sought the Throne of Grace on our behalf have been called Home, yet it has been the lovingkindness of our Master to raise up others to fill their places. We devoutly hope they will not slacken in their intercession, for we are as needy as ever. Things are far more difficult today than they were twenty years ago, but God's grace is still sufficient. Please seek it for us.

We are thankful to say that the prayers of our Christian friends have been answered in other directions. This magazine is printed in Bath, and though the building was damaged by the air raids in April, the press itself was unharmed: thus in spite of delay in the getting out of several issues, the whole volume has been completed. The acute paper shortage has been a real difficulty, yet the Lord graciously provided. The oceans have been increasingly infested by the enemy, yet so far as we know not a single copy failed to reach our readers in America, Australia, and even Malta. Once again funds have come in so freely that every bill has been promptly met and there is a credit balance to carry forward. Throughout another year both the editor and his wife have been preserved in good health and have lacked no good thing. We serve a great Master and He is greatly to be praised.

Once again it is our unpleasant task to drop from our small mailing list many names of those who give no practical evidence they are interested in this publication. Others will be needed to take their places. But how shall we obtain them? Will not those who welcome and value this magazine please make a special effort to introduce us to new readers? We are sending the "Studies" to many Chaplains in the Forces and would like to hear from them if they find our articles are, under God, of help to them. We wish to send to more of the Chaplains but know not which of them appreciates spiritual literature. The 1942 bound volume will be available soon (D.V.) at the old price: 4/6 (one dollar) post paid. We hope to have enough to supply all applicants who order early. With Christian greetings to those of the "little flock." Yours by Divine Mercy, Arthur W. and Vera F. Pink.

