

**Volume 21—Studies in the Scriptures—February, 1942**  
**THE DIVINE SERVANT.**

God has many servants, not only on earth but also in Heaven, for the angels are “all ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14) who “do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psa. 103:20). But what we would now contemplate is not any servant of God or from God but something infinitely more blessed and amazing, namely, the Divine Servant Himself. What a remarkable phenomenon: an anomaly in any other connection, yea, what amounts to a contradiction in terms, for supremacy and subordination, Godhood and servant-hood are opposites. Yet such is the surprising conjunction which Holy Writ sets before us: that the Most High abased Himself, that the Lord of Glory assumed the form of a menial, the King of kings became a subject. The vast majority of us at least were taught from earliest infancy that the Son of God took unto Himself our nature and was born as a Babe at Bethlehem. Perhaps our very familiarity with this has tended to blunt our sense of wonderment at it. For a few minutes let us endeavour to ponder not so much the miracle or mystery of the Divine Incarnation, but the *fact* itself.

“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (Isa. 52:13). There are four things here for our meditation. First, the note of exclamation: “Behold.” Second, the Subject thereof: the Divine “Servant.” Third, the perfection of His work: “shall deal prudently.” Fourth, the reward bestowed upon Him: “He shall be exalted and extolled.” We regard the opening “Behold” as not only a call for us to focus our gaze upon and attentively and adoringly consider the One here brought before us, but also and primarily as an exclamation or note of wonderment. What an amazing spectacle to see the Maker of Heaven and earth in the form of a Servant—the Giver of the Law Himself become subject to it! What an astonishing phenomenon that the Lord of Glory should take upon Him such an office. How this ought to impress our hearts and stir our souls. “Behold!” Wonder at it! Be filled with holy awe, and then consider, What ought to be my response thereto?

“Behold, My Servant.” Observe none other than the Father Himself *owning* Christ in this very office. This is most blessed for it is in sharp contrast from the treatment which He received at the hands of men. It was because the Messiah appeared in *Servant* form that the Jews despised and rejected Him: “Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary . . . and they were offended at Him” (Mark 6:3). Apparently the holy angels were nonplussed at such an incredible sight, for they received, and I think needed, the Divine order: “*Let* all the angels of God worship Him,” when He brought His Firstbegotten into the world (Heb. 1:6). “*Let*,” as though they were uncertain—as well they might be now their Maker had assumed creature-form. “All the angels of God,” none excepted, the highest as well as the lowest, arch-angel, cherubim, seraphim, principalities and powers—“worship Him,” render homage and praise unto Him, for so far from His self-abasement having tarnished His personal glory, it enhanced the same.

How unspeakably blessed to hear the Father Himself testifying *His* approbation of the One who had entered Bethlehem’s manger, bidding the angels not to be staggered by so unparalleled a sight but to *continue* worshipping the second Person in the Holy Trinity, even though He now wore a menial’s garb. Nor has the Holy Spirit failed to record their obedience. For He has expressly told us that while the shepherds were keeping watch over their flock by night a celestial messenger announced to them the Saviour’s birth. “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God

and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13, 14). How jealous was the Father of His incarnate Son's honour! This was evidenced again when Jesus condescended to be baptized in the Jordan: "The heavens were opened unto Him," the Spirit of God descended like a dove and abode upon Him, and the Father audibly declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16, 17). "Behold, My Servant," He says to us, and well may we be filled with wonderment and awe!

"Shall deal prudently." Here we need to be much on our guard lest we interpret carnally. In the judgment of the world, to "deal prudently," is to act tactfully—and nine times out of ten "tact" is nothing more or less than a sacrifice or compromise of principle. Measured by the standards of unregenerate "policy" Christ acted very imprudently. He could have spared Himself much suffering had He been "less extreme" and followed the religious tide of His day. He could have avoided much opposition had He been "milder" in His denunciations of the Pharisees or withheld those aspects of the Truth which are most distasteful to the natural man. Had He been "more tactful" as this evil generation considers things, He had never overthrown the tables of the money-changers in the temple and charged such unholy traffickers with making His Father's House "a den of thieves," for it was then He began to "make so much trouble for Himself." But from the *spiritual* viewpoint, from the angle of ever having the Father's glory in view, from the side of seeking the eternal good of His own, Christ ever "dealt prudently," and none other than the Father Himself testifies to the fact.

Instead of defining and illustrating wherein Christ dealt "prudently" we have rather sought to dispose of a general misconception and warn against interpreting that expression in a fleshly manner after the common order of our day. While it is true that the Christian may through rashness and acting with a zeal that is not according to knowledge, bring upon himself much unnecessary trouble, yet if he is faithful to God and uncompromising in his separation from the world, he is certain to incur the hatred and opposition of the ungodly. He must *expect* religious professors to tell him he has only himself to blame, that it is his lack of tact which has made things so unpleasant for him. Christ's dealing "prudently" means He acted *wisely*: He never erred, never acted foolishly, never did anything which needed to be corrected; but the wisdom from which He acted was not of this world, but was "from above," and therefore was "pure, peaceable, gentle" (James 3:17). O for more of *such* "prudence"—obtained by communion with Christ, drinking into His spirit.

"He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high." This tells of the reward given Christ for His willingness to become a "Servant," and for His faithfulness while discharging that office. It tells us first of the Father's own valuation of His Son's condescension and of the recompense He has made the One who became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow: of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). The perfect Servant has been exalted to the Throne, seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3), "angels, authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter 3:22). It tells also of Christ's exaltation in the thoughts and affections of His people. Nothing endears the Redeemer more to their hearts than the realization that it was for

their sakes that He “became poor” and abased Himself. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12) is their united testimony. O that He may be magnified more and more in the daily lives of both writer and reader.—A.W.P.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

### 20. *Helping erring Brethren: Matthew 7:5.*

The Rule of Conduct which the Word of God sets before us contains far more than a series of negative prohibitions forbidding certain things: it also marks out a path to be walked in, setting forth positive directions of action. To be preserved from sinning is good, but to be impelled unto practical holiness is far better, the one being the means of the other. It is not sufficient for the branches of the vine to be kept free from blight and pests: they must produce fruit if they are to justify their existence. It is not enough for a garden to be clear of weeds: it must yield healthy vegetables if it is to be of service to its owner. So of the Christian: “be not overcome of evil” is only the first part of the duty laid upon him—“but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21) is what is especially required of us. An illustration of this important principle, so frequently inculcated by Christ and His Apostles, appears in the passage now before us. Our Lord did not stop short by merely condemning the evil habit of unlawfully judging our brethren, but went on to give instructions as to how we should deal with those needing assistance, and particularly how we must deal with *ourselves* if we are to be qualified for a ministry of helpfulness unto others.

From what our Lord has said in the opening verses of Matthew 7, it might possibly be concluded that it is not permissible for us to admonish a brother nor seek the amendment of his fault—but further reflection should show us that that inference is entirely erroneous. Christ has plainly warned us, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17)—“fulfill” it not only in His mediatorial and atoning work, but in His teachings and by inspiring His followers to act according to the requirements of the Law (Rom. 3:31; 7:22). Now the Law had expressly enjoined, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him” (Lev. 19:17), and therefore it must not be supposed for a *moment* that there was anything in the teaching of Christ which set aside that statute. It cannot be insisted upon too strongly today that there is not the slightest conflict between the Moral Law and the Gospel, but rather the most perfect harmony. It cannot be otherwise, since the Author of the one is equally the Author of the other, and He “changeth not.”

One of the most disastrous errors and follies of many preachers and “Bible teachers” fifty years ago, the terrible effects of which are now spread before those who have eyes to see, was their idea that during the Old Testament era God’s people were under the stern regime of Law unrelieved by Divine grace, and that Christ came here to set aside that harsh regime and bring in a much milder dispensation. Not so—Christ came here to “magnify the Law and make it honourable” (Isa. 42:21). That Law needed no apology and no amendment, for it is “holy, just and good,” being “spiritual” (Rom. 7:12, 14). The sum of its requirements are that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind and strength and our neighbour as ourselves: and every requirement of the Moral Law is enforced in the precepts of the Gospel. The great difference between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations lies not in any change in the Rule of Conduct set before us, but in the more effectual motives by which that Rule is now enforced and the Divine enablement which is now vouchsafed. As a nation Israel was unregenerate and therefore the Law was “weak through the flesh” (Rom. 8:3); but Christians have received the spirit of “power” (2 Tim. 1:6) and a holy nature which delights in the Law.

“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him” (Lev. 19:17). How different is the tenor of that from the maudlin sentimentality of this effeminate generation. Nowadays one who seeks to be faithful to the standard of holiness and his brethren is, in the vast majority of instances, regarded as “lacking in love.” People who speak thus have no idea of what spiritual love is. Spiritual love is no sickly sentiment but a holy principle. God is love, yet that prevents Him not from using the rod on His children when they require it, but rather moves Him to employ it. That parent who follows the line of least resistance allowing the children to do as they please and never chastising them for their faults is lacking in love towards his offspring. He who truly seeks their good lays aside his own feelings and inflicts corporeal punishment when it is needed is the father who evidences the most love. Genuine love is faithful, sets aside one’s own interests and feelings, and ever seeks to promote the well-being of the object of it.

Thus should it be between Christian brethren; thus it must be if obedience is rendered to the Divine precepts. It is not love which ignores a brother’s failings, which refuses to perform the unpleasant duty of seeking an amendment in his ways. No, it is a species of *hatred*, as Leviticus 19:17 plainly intimates, for there is no third quality between love and hatred, as there is no third alternative between right and wrong. If I really have my brother’s welfare at heart then love itself requires that I wink not at his sins, but rather endeavour to save him from them—just as much as it would demand me warning him when I perceive the first wisp of smoke issuing from one of his windows: why wait till his house is half burned down before giving the alarm! Furthermore, to ignore the sins of one with whom I am intimate makes me (in some measure at least) a “partaker of them” (1 Tim. 5:22), as is intimated by the alternative rendering of the last clause of Leviticus 19:17: “that thou bear not sin for him” (margin).

There was therefore nothing in Christ’s teaching in Matthew 7 which in any way conflicted with Leviticus 19:17, but rather that which threw light thereon. It was not the act of admonishing a brother which He here forbade but the wrong manner in which it may be done. This is clear from the verse at which we have now arrived: “Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:5). Here our Lord makes known the course which we must follow if we are to be of real help to those in whose case the old saying is likely to prove true—“a stitch in time saves nine”—helping to correct a man’s fault often saves from having to go to him about a much graver offense. But even here, the removing of a tiny particle from the eye of another is not one which any careless hand can successfully undertake, rather will such a hand irritate the other’s eye and make bad matters worse.

First a word needs to be said on the epithet used by Christ on this occasion. It looks back to the case described in verses 3 and 4, where this evil habit of rashly censuring others, to which we are all so prone, is represented as one steadily fixing his unfriendly gaze upon the mote that is in his brother’s eye while indifferent to the beam which is in his own—undertaking to correct some lesser fault in him while allowing a much graver sin in himself. What else could our holy Lord designate such a despicable person but a “hypocrite,” that is, the actor of a part, a pretending to be very zealous to the requirements of holiness while himself was living in neglect of and violating its plainest dictates? Uncompromising faithfulness would not permit of Christ’s using any milder term. Yet there is no more reason why we should conclude from this word that the one to

whom it is applied was unregenerate than His declaring to Peter, "thou art an offense to Me" (Matt. 16:23) or His terming two of His disciples "fools" (Luke 24:25).

Had the one whom our Lord here addressed been an unregenerate soul not only would He have refrained from designating the one whom He censured as "a brother," but we can scarcely conceive of Him going to the pains of instructing one who was still dead in trespasses and sins what he must first do in order that he might "see clearly to cast out the mote out of his brother's eye." No, it appears to us that the Lord designated this careless believer who failed to unsparingly judge himself (though seeking to correct another) a "hypocrite" to express His detestation of such conduct, to let us know how it appears in His eyes, and therefore to bring home to our hearts the gravity of a practice which we are so ready to tolerate in ourselves. Nothing is more hateful to God than play-acting, and we are guilty of this very thing when we pose as faithful guardians of our brother's interests while we are faithless in our personal dealings with God himself—while nothing is more *pleasing* in His sight than honesty and sincerity, which is the opposite of hypocrisy.

"First cast out the beam out of thine own eye" means be faithful in dealing with yourself, unsparingly judging yourself before God, putting away out of your heart and life whatsoever you know to be displeasing unto Him. This is the grand remedy for the disease of unlawfully judging others, as it is the chief requirement if you are to be of any real help in ministering to your erring brethren. Not only is it utterly incongruous for one who is allowing and indulging some flagrant lust to pose as being grieved over some infirmity in another, but one who is almost totally blinded spiritually (by arrogance and hypocrisy) is utterly incapable of performing such a difficult and delicate operation as the removal of a mote from his brother's eye. One who is under the influence of any gross sin not only has his spiritual discernment obscured but his spiritual sensibilities are so blunted that he is unable to sympathize with a suffering one—such an one is not only unfit to judge others, but thoroughly disqualified as a critic and censor of their minor failings.

Casting the beam out of my own eye signifies unqualified judging of myself before God (1 Cor. 11:21). My first responsibility is to diligently examine my own heart, carefully consider my own ways, critically measure myself by the unerring standard of Scripture and honestly and constantly confess my many sins to God (Lam. 3:40). If I am sincerely desirous of pleasing God in all things, I shall beg Him to show me what there is in my own life which is displeasing to Him (Psa. 139:23, 24). If I truly long to show forth His praises (1 Peter 2:9), I shall not excuse my fleshly conduct but shall condemn it and earnestly seek grace to forsake the same. And if I genuinely wish to be of real spiritual help unto my erring brethren I shall rigidly purge myself of everything which would defeat such efforts. Only as I am unflinchingly faithful with myself can I hope to be of any assistance to others. Clear vision is needed to locate and remove a "mote" from the eye of another, and clear vision comes only from my own close walking with Him who is light (Psa. 36:9; John 8:12). How much longer are we going to suffer the beam in our own eye?

One principal reason why we are so slow in casting the beam out of our own eye is because we fail to "perceive" it, as is intimated by Christ in Matthew 7:3. Obviously this does not mean that we are totally unaware of its presence but rather that we fail to make conscience of the same. The expression "perceive it not" has reference to an act of the mind which follows upon the bare sight of anything consisting of serious consideration

and prolonged meditation. It is the word used in “*consider* the lilies” of the field (Luke 12:27): that is, not only look upon them but ponder them over in your mind. It is the word used in “a man that *beholdeth* his natural face in a glass” (James 1:23): that is, who gazes steadily at it and considers each feature. Thus, “perceive not” in Matthew 7:3 means a failure to attentively consider and regard. If we are to truly “perceive” the beam in our own eye, with the purpose of casting it out, we must make conscience of the same, seriously considering its heinousness in God’s sight, labouring to have our hearts affected by it.

It should be obvious that we shall never voluntarily and deliberately eject from our hearts and lives that which we still love and cherish, and therefore we must labour to have our hearts so affected by our lusts and sins that we shall sorrow over and hate them. The converse of this is that awful deadness of soul and security in sin, which if undisturbed is certain to lead to the most fearful if not fatal consequences. Proof of this appears in the case of the antediluvians of whom Christ declared they “*knew not* until the Flood came and took them all away” (Matt. 24:39)—though they may have had some consciousness of their carnality and madness, yet they thought not seriously thereon, and so remained secure in their wickedness. A similar state of affairs existed in Israel in the days of Jeremiah. The Lord complained that the people made no conscience of their sins, remaining secure therein: “No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?” (8:6). Nothing is more serious and fatal than to commit sins and refuse to be humbled by them, but instead to remain unconcerned. Sins must be laid to heart and sorrowed over before they will be forsaken and expelled.

In order to be helpful at this point it is necessary to be explicit, so let us mention one or two things which are so often a “beam” in the eyes of God’s people. First, *hypocrisy*, which whenever it dominates the heart prevents all spiritual growth and fruit. Christians are guilty of allowing this vile weed to flourish far more than they are aware of. This is the case where we are more anxious to please men than the Lord; where we are more diligent in seeking to perform the external requirements of the first table of the Law than of the second—note how Christ pressed the commandment of the *second* table on the rich young ruler (Luke 18:20)—where we are more careful to please God in the outward action than we are with the strength of our hearts. Another great “beam” is *spiritual pride*, which also is most abhorrent unto Him with whom we have to do. This it is which makes us pleased with ourselves, self-confident, and to look down upon others. It is an inward poison which prevents the health of grace within. It is that which marks Laodiceans (Rev. 3:17). Finally, any particular besetting sin or lust which is not resisted and mortified soon assumes the proportions of a “beam” and effectually blinds our judgment.

An important practical question which needs to be answered at this stage is, What course should be followed in order that we may feel *the weight* of these “beams” pressing upon our hearts? Surely it must be by counteracting that tendency within us to regard our sins lightly, to look upon our own constitutional faults as mere “motes,” and that must be done by faithfully examining them in the light of God’s Word. More particularly we ought to compare the sins of which we are guilty with the original transgression of Adam. Are we not tolerating things in our hearts and lives which are even greater evils than Adam’s eating of the forbidden fruit considered in the fact? yet by that sin he not only brought death upon himself but also upon all his posterity! Again, if we would perceive and feel the exceeding sinfulness of our sins we must view them in the light of Calvary,

and observe the fearful price which had to be paid for the atonement of them. Finally, we must contemplate the heinousness and guilt of our sins in view of the Lake of Fire, for nothing short of everlasting suffering is what they deserve.

It is only as we feel the dreadful weight of our sins and their enormity in the sight of the Holy One that we shall really cry out, "Hide Thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:9, 10). But it is not sufficient that we sorrow over our sins and seek God's forgiveness of them: we must labour to break them off and amend our evil ways, striving by all means that sin may be weakened in us more and more. It is the one who confesses and *forsakes* his sins which finds mercy (Prov. 28:13); on the other hand, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). Unless I cast the beam out of my own eye, how can I attend to the mote in another's? unless I disallow and mortify my lusts I am totally disqualified to rebuke sin in my brother. "Create in me a clean heart, O God . . . *then* will I teach transgressors Thy ways" (Psa. 51:10, 13). "*When* thou art converted (recovered) strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32)!

"And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:5). In order to remove a "mote" from another's eye one must be *close to him*! Therein Christ intimates who are the ones we should seek to help by correcting their faults, namely, those who are near to us and not strangers: those who are members of our own family, intimate friends, and those with whom we are in close church fellowship. Much harm has been done through ignoring this obvious and simple rule. My responsibility is first unto myself, then unto those bearing intimate ties: alas, not only do many think highly of themselves but they allow sentiment to hinder faithful dealings with those dear unto them. But this necessity of closeness to one from whose eye I would remove a mote not only connotes a nearness of relationship, but also *a moral nearness*, winning a place in his affections and esteem: I cannot get close to another while standing on a lofty pedestal of assumed self-superiority!

No service calls for more prayer, delicacy of feeling, spiritual wisdom and meekness, than does this one. The motive impelling it must be *love*—the end in view the *glory of God*—our aim the recovery of an erring one. The eye is the most sensitive organ of the body and the most easily damaged. A steady and gentle hand is required to extract the foreign substance from it. Care should be taken in selecting the *best time* to approach an erring brother so that the reproof is likely to be effectual. Before Abigail admonished her husband for his churlish conduct unto David she waited till the wine had gone out of his head (1 Sam. 25:36, 37)!—never correct one while he is in a towering rage. The nature of the fault in the erring one must be weighed: whether it proceeds from human frailty or is some deliberate and high-handed sin, if we are to speak to him "a word in season." Pains should be taken to make him see he is at fault, that he has acted contrary to God's Word—for we are required to reprove and rebuke "with all longsuffering *and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2), and thereby deliver the admonition not in our own name but in *God's*.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Only he who is "spiritual"—who allows not sin in himself and walks softly with God—is fit to approach a fellow believer for this necessary and difficult task. We are to remember that we are so united together in one family and fellowship that the wrong-doing of one concerns all, and that it is in the interests of the whole Household of Faith to seek the restora-



tion of the erring one. Such restoration can only be performed “in the spirit of meekness”—gentleness and lowliness of heart—for harshness and arrogance repel. Whatever fault he has committed let us not forget that but for Divine grace we, too, would fall in the same way, as we acknowledge to God whenever we pray “lead *us* not into temptation.” That which we say to him must not only be “a word in season” but “*fitly* spoken” (Prov. 25:11)!

Finally, it should be pointed out that if we are to remove the mote from another’s eye *he* must be *willing* for us to do so—any spirit of resistance makes the operation impossible. The very figure used by Christ here plainly connotes that each of us should freely submit ourselves to brotherly correction—“submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:21). It is very reprehensible and evidences a sad state of soul when we resent and oppose the faithful admonitions of our Christian friends, like the Israelite said to Moses when he reproved him, “Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?” (Exo. 2:14). “Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuses instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured” (Prov. 13:18). “He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding” (Prov. 15:32). “It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools” (Eccl. 7:5): though the song of fools may be more *pleasant* to our ears, yet the reproofs of the wise are more *profitable* to our souls if we heed the same.—A.W.P.

## THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

### 26. Refreshed.

“There hath no temptation (trial: whether in the form of seductions or afflictions, solicitations to sin or hardships) taken you but such as is common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13). There hath no trial come upon you but such as human nature is liable unto and has often been subject to. You have not been called upon to experience any super-human or unprecedented temptation. But how generally is this fact lost sight of when the dark clouds of adversity come our way! Then we are inclined to think, none was ever so severely tried as I am. It is well at such a moment to remind ourselves of this truth and ponder the records of those who have gone before us. Is it excruciating suffering of body which causes you to suppose your anguish is beyond that of any other? Then recall the case of Job, “with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown”! Is it bereavement, the unexpected snatching away of loved ones? Then remember also that Job lost all his sons and daughters in a single night. Is it a succession of hardships and persecutions encountered in the Lord’s service? Then read 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 and note the multiplied and painful experiences through which the chief of the Apostles was called upon to pass.

But perhaps that which most overwhelms some reader is *the shame* he feels over his breakdown under trials. He knows that others have been tried as severely as he has, yea much more severely, yet they bore them with courage and composure, whereas he has been crushed by them. Instead of drawing comfort from the Divine promises, he has given way to a spirit of despair; instead of bearing the rod meekly and patiently, he has rebelled and murmured; instead of plodding along the path of duty, he has deserted it. Was there ever such a sorry failure as I am? is now his lament. Rightly should we be humbled and mourn over such failures to quit ourselves “like men” (1 Cor. 16:13); contritely should we confess such sins unto God. Yet we must not imagine that all is now lost. Even this experience is not unparalleled in the lives of others. Though Job cursed not God, yet he did the day of his birth. So, too, did Jeremiah (20:14). Elijah deserted his post of duty, lay down under the juniper tree and prayed for death. What a mirror is Scripture in which we may see ourselves!

“But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). Yes, God is faithful even if we are faithless: He is true to His covenant engagements, and though He visits our iniquities with stripes, yet His lovingkindness will He never utterly take from one of His own (Psa. 89:32, 33). It is in the hour of trial, just when the clouds are blackest and a spirit of dejection has seized us, that God’s faithfulness appears most conspicuously. He knows our frame and will not suffer us to be unduly tried, but will, “with the temptation also make a way to escape.” That is to say, He will either lighten the burden or give increased strength to bear it, so that we shall not be utterly overwhelmed by it. “God is faithful”: not that He is engaged to secure us if we deliberately plunge into temptations. No, if we seek to resist temptation, if we call upon Him in the day of trouble, if we plead His promises and count upon Him undertaking for us, He most certainly will not fail us. Thus, though on the one hand we must not presume and be reckless, on the other hand we should not despair and give up the fight. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

How strikingly and how blessedly was 1 Corinthians 10:13 illustrated and exemplified in the case of Elijah! It was a sore temptation or trial, when after all his fidelity in the

Lord's service, his life should be threatened by the wicked Jezebel and when all his efforts to bring back Israel to the worship of the true God seemed to be entirely in vain. It was more than he could bear: he was weary of such a one-sided and losing fight, and he prayed to be removed from the arena. But God was faithful and with the sore temptation "also made a way to escape" that he might be able to bear it. In Elijah's experience, as is so often the case with us, God did not *remove* the burden but He gave fresh supplies of grace so the Prophet could bear it. He neither took away Jezebel nor wrought a mighty work of grace in the hearts of Israel but He renewed the strength of His overwrought servant. Though Elijah had fled from his post of duty the Lord did not desert the Prophet in his hour of need. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). O what a God is ours! No mere fair-weather friend is the One who shed His blood to redeem us, but a Brother "born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17). He has solemnly sworn, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and therefore may we triumphantly declare, "The Lord is my Helper and I will not fear what men shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5, 6).

As we pointed out last month, the first thing which the Lord did in renewing the strength of Elijah was to give His beloved sleep, thereby refreshing his weary and travel-worn body. How inadequately do we value this Divine blessing, not only for the rest it brings to our physical frames but for the relief it affords to a worried mind. What a mercy it is for many harassed souls that they are not awake the full twenty-four hours! Those who are healthy and ambitious may begrudge the hours spent in slumber as so much "necessary waste of time," but others who are wracked with pain or who are distressed must regard a few hours of unconsciousness each night as a great boon. None of us are as grateful as we should be for this constantly recurring privilege nor as hearty in returning thanks unto its Bestower. That this is one of the Creator's gifts unto us is seen from the very first occurrence of the word in Scripture: "The Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam" (Gen. 2:21).

"And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, *behold*, then an angel touched him" (1 Kings 19:5). Here was the second proof of the Lord's tender care for His servant and an inexpressibly blessed one was it. Each separate word calls for devout attention. "Behold": a note of wonderment to stimulate our interest and stir us to reverent amazement. "Behold" what? Some token of the Lord's displeasure, as we might well expect: a drenching rain for example, to add to the Prophet's discomfort? No, far otherwise. Behold a grand demonstration of that truth, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9). Those verses are often quoted, yet few of the Lord's people are familiar with the words which immediately precede them and of which they are an amplification: "Let us return to the LORD and He will have mercy upon us, and to our God for He will *abundantly pardon*." Thus it is not the loftiness of His wisdom but the infinitude of His mercy which is there in view.

"Behold, *then*." This time-mark gives additional emphasis to the amazing phenomenon which is here spread before our eyes. It was not on the summit of Carmel, but here in the wilderness that Elijah received this touching proof of his Master's care. It was not immediately after his conflict with the prophets of Baal, but following upon his flight from Jezreel that he received this distinguishing favour. It was not while he was engaged

in importunate prayer begging God to supply his need, but when he had petulantly asked that his life should be taken from him that provision was now made to preserve it. How often God is better to us than our fears. We look for judgment, and behold mercy! Has there not been just such a “then” in our lives? Certainly there has been—more than once in this writer’s experience—and we doubt not in each of our Christian readers. Well then may we unite together in acknowledging, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa. 103:10). Rather has He dealt with us after His covenant faithfulness and according to His knowledge-passing love.

“Behold, then an *angel* touched him” (1 Kings 19:5). It was not a fellow-traveler whose steps God now directed toward the juniper tree and whose heart He moved to have compassion unto the exhausted one who lay beneath it. That had been a signal mercy, but here we gaze upon something far more amazing. God dispatched one of those celestial creatures who surround His Throne on high to comfort the dejected Prophet and supply his wants. Verily this was not “after the manner of men,” but blessed be His name, it was after the manner of Him who is “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10). And grace, my reader, takes no account of our worthiness or unworthiness, of our deservedness or undeservedness. No, grace is free and sovereign and looks not outside itself for the motive of its exercise. Man often deals harshly with his fellows ignoring their frailty and forgetting that he is as liable to fall by the wayside as they are, and therefore he frequently acts hurriedly, inconsistently, and unkindly toward them. But not so does God: He ever deals patiently with His erring children and with the deepest pity and tenderness.

“Behold, then an angel touched him,” gently rousing him from his sleep, that he might see and partake of the refreshment which had been provided for him. How this reminds us of that word, “are they not all (the holy angels) ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb. 1:14). This is something about which we hear very little in this materialistic and skeptical age, but concerning which the Scriptures reveal much for our comfort. It was an angel who came and delivered Lot from Sodom ere that city was destroyed by fire and brimstone (Gen. 19:15, 16). It was an angel which “shut the lions’ mouths” when Daniel was cast into their den (6:22). It was angels who convoyed the soul of the beggar into “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). It was an angel which visited Peter in the prison, smote the chains from his hands, caused the iron gate of the city to “opened to them of his own accord” (Acts 12:7, 10) and thus delivered him from his enemies. It was an angel who assured Paul that none on the ship should perish (Acts 27:23). Nor do we believe for a moment that the ministry of angels is a thing of the past, though they no longer manifest themselves in tangible form as in Old Testament times—Hebrews 1:14 precludes such an idea.

“Then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals and a cruse of water at his head” (1 Kings 19:5, 6). Here was the third provision which the Lord so graciously made for the refreshment of His exhausted servant. Once more we note the thought-provoking “behold.” And well may we ponder this sight and be moved to wonderment at it—wonderment at the amazing grace of Elijah’s God—and our God. Twice before the Lord provided sustenance for the Prophet in a miraculous manner: by the ravens at the brook Cherith, by the widow woman at Zarephath; but here none less than an *angel* ministered to him! Behold *the constancy* of God’s love which all Christians profess to believe in, but which few seem to realize in moments of depression and darkness. As another has said, “It is not

difficult to believe that God loves us when we go with the multitude to the house of God with joy and praise and stand in the sunlit circle: but it is hard for us to believe that He feels as much love for us when, exiled by our sin to the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, our soul is cast down within us and deep calls to deep, and His waves and billows surge around.

“It is not difficult to believe that God loves us when, like Elijah at Cherith and Carmel, we do His commandments hearkening unto the voice of His Word. But it is not so easy when like Elijah in the desert we lie stranded, or as dismantled and rudderless vessels, roll in the trough of the waves. It is not difficult to believe in God’s love when like Peter we stand on the mount of glory and in the rapture of joy propose to share a tabernacle with Christ forever—but it is well-nigh impossible when, with the same Apostle we deny our Master with oaths and are abashed by a look in which grief masters rebuke.” Most necessary is it for our peace and comfort to know and believe that the love of God abides unchanging as Himself. What proof did Elijah here receive of the same: not only was he not forsaken by the Lord, but there was no upbraiding of him nor word of reproach upon his conduct. Ah, who can fathom, yea, even understand, the amazing grace of our God: the more sin abounds the more does His grace super-abound.

Not only did Elijah receive unmistakable proof of the constancy of God’s love at this time, but it was manifested in a specially tender manner. He had drunk of the brook Cherith, but never of water drawn by angelic hands from the river of God. He had eaten of bread foraged for him by ravens and of meal multiplied by a miracle, but never of cakes manufactured by celestial fingers. And why these *special* proofs of tenderness? Certainly not because God condoned His servant, but because a special manifestation of love was needed to assure the Prophet that he was still the object of Divine love, to soften his spirit and lead him to repentance. How this reminds us of that scene portrayed in John 21, where we behold a breakfast prepared by the risen Saviour and a fire of coals to warm the wet fishermen. And He did this for the very men who, on the night of His betrayal, forsook Him and fled—and who refused to believe in His triumph when the women told them of the empty tomb and of His appearing unto them in tangible form!

“And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals and a cruse of water at his head” (1 Kings 19:6). Not only does this “behold” emphasize the riches of God’s grace in ministering to His wayward servant, but it also calls attention to a marvel of His power. In their petulance and unbelief Israel of old had asked, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” (Psa. 78:19). They murmured against God, saying, “It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness” (Exo. 14:12). And here was Elijah, not merely on the fringe of this desolate and barren wilderness but “a day’s journey” into its interior. Nothing grew there save a few shrubs and no stream moistened its parched sands. But adverse circumstances and unpropitious conditions present no obstacles to the Almighty. Though means are wanting to us, the lack of them presents no difficulty to the Creator—He can produce water from the flinty rock and turn stones into bread. Therefore no good thing shall they lack whom the Lord God has engaged to provide for: His mercy and His power are equally pledged on their behalf. Remember then, O doubting one, the God of Elijah still lives and whether your lot be cast in a time of war or famine, your bread and your water are sure.

“And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals and a cruse of water at his head” (1 Kings 19:6). There is yet another direction to which this “behold” points

us which has escaped the notice of the commentators, namely, the kind of service which the angel here performed. What an amazing thing that so dignified a creature should be engaged in such a lowly task: that the fingers of a celestial being should be employed in preparing and baking a cake! It would appear a degrading task for one of those exalted beings which surround the throne of the Most High to minister unto one who belonged to an inferior and fallen race, who was undutiful and out of temper: to leave a spiritual occupation in order to prepare food for Elijah's body—how debasing! Well may we marvel at such a sight and admire the angel's obedience in complying with his Master's order. But more, it should encourage us to heed that precept and "condescend to men of low estate" (Rom. 12:16), to regard no employment beneath us by which we may benefit a fellow creature who is dejected in mind and whose spirit is overwhelmed within him. Despise not the most menial duty when an angel disdained not to cook food for a sinful man.

"And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again" (1 Kings 19:6). Once again it is evident that these narratives of Holy Writ are drawn by an impartial hand and are painted in the colours of truth and reality. The Holy Spirit has depicted the conduct of men, even of the most eminent, not as it should have been but as it actually was. That is why we find our own path and experiences therein so accurately depicted. Had some religious idealist invented the story, *how had he portrayed* Elijah's response to this amazing display of the Lord's grace, of the constancy of His love, and of the special tenderness now shown him? Why obviously he would have pictured the Prophet as overwhelmed by such Divine favour, thoroughly melted by such lovingkindness, and prostrate before Him in adoring worship! How different the Spirit's description of fact! There is no intimation that the petulant Prophet was moved at heart, no mention of his bowing in worship, not so much as a word that he returned thanks: merely that he ate and drank and *lay down again*.

Alas, what is man? what is the best of men looked at apart from Christ? How does the most mature saint act the moment the Holy Spirit suspends His operations and ceases to work in and through him? No differently than the unregenerate, for the flesh is no better in him than in the former. When he is out of communion with God, when his will has been crossed, he is as peevish as a spoilt child. He is no longer capable of appreciating Divine mercies, because he considers himself harshly dealt with, and instead of expressing gratitude for temporal favours he accepts them as a matter of course. If the reader feels we are putting an unwarranted construction on this silence of the narrative, that we should not assume Elijah failed to return thanks, we would ask him to read the sequel and ascertain whether or not it shows the Prophet *continued* in a fretful mood or not. The omission of Elijah's worship and giving of thanks for the refreshment is only too sadly true to life. How this should rebuke us for similar omissions! How this absence of praise should remind us of *our* ingratitude at Divine favours when our wills are crossed, and humble us at the recollection thereof.—A.W.P.

## THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S IMPOTENCY.

### 10. *Its Exposition.*

*(Intended chiefly for Preachers).*

The preceding articles should have made it clear that the subject of the sinner's moral impotency is far more than an academical one, a flight into theological metaphysics. Rather is it a truth of Divine revelation, and we may add, an unique one, for it will not be found enunciated in any of the leading religions of antiquity, like Zoroastrianism, Buddhism or Confucianism, nor do we remember finding any trace of it in the poets and philosophers of early Greece. It is a truth which is made prominent in the Scriptures, and therefore must be given a place in the pulpit if we are to declare "all the counsel of God." It is closely bound up with the Law and the Gospel: the great end of the former being to demonstrate its reality, of the latter to make known the remedy. It is one of the chief battering-rams of the Spirit which He directs against the unconscious pride of the human heart, for belief in his own capabilities is the foundation on which man's self-righteousness rests. It is the one doctrine which above all others reveals the catastrophic effects of the Fall and shuts up the sinner to the sovereign mercy of God as his only hope.

It is not sufficient for the preacher to generalize and speak of "the ruin which sin has wrought" and affirm that man is "totally depraved," for such expressions convey no adequate concept to the modern mind. It is necessary that he should particularize and show from Holy Writ that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." His task is to paint fallen human nature in its true colours and not deceive by flattery. The state of the natural man is far, far worse than he has any consciousness of. Though he knows he is not perfect, though in serious moments he is aware that all is not well with him, yet he has no realization whatever that his condition is desperate and irremediable so far as all self-help is concerned. A great many people regard religion as a medicine for the soul, and suppose that if it be taken regularly it will ensure their salvation—that if they do this and that and avoid the other, all will be well in the end. They are totally oblivious to the fact that they are "without strength" and can no more perform *spiritual* duties than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots.

It is a matter of first importance that the moral inability of fallen man should be understood by all: it concerns both young and old, illiterate and educated, to have right views thereon. It is most essential that the unsaved should be made sensible not only that they are unable to do what God requires of them, but also *why* they are unable: that not only is it impossible for them to "fulfill all righteousness," but also the cause of this impossibility. Their self-sufficiency cannot be undermined while they believe they have it in their own power to perform God's commands and to comply with the terms of His Gospel. Nevertheless they must not be left with the impression that their impotency is a calamity for which they are *not* to blame, a deprivation for which they are to be pitied; for they are endowed with faculties suited to respond unto Law and Gospel alike. A mistake concerning either of these truths—man's impotency and man's responsibility—is likely to have a fatal consequence.

On the one hand, as long as men imagine they have it in their own power to perform their whole duty or do all that God now requires of them in order to their obtaining pardon and eternal life, they will feel at ease, and be most apt to neglect a diligent applying of themselves to the performance thereof. They are not at all likely to pray in earnest or to watch against sin with any anxiety. They will neither see the need of God's working in

them “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” nor the necessity of their “working out their own salvation with fear and trembling.” To awake men out of this dream of self-sufficiency the Saviour has given such alarming declarations as these: “except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3), “no man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44). And to cut off effectually from the unregenerate all hope of obtaining mercy on the ground of the supposed acceptableness of anything they have done or can ever do until created in Christ Jesus unto good works, His Apostle declared, “they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom. 8:8).

But on the other hand: should the unregenerate be allowed to suppose they are devoid of those faculties which are necessary for knowing God’s will and doing those things which are pleasing in His sight, such a delusion is likely to prove equally fatal to them. For in that case how could they ever be convinced of either sin or righteousness: of sin in themselves and of righteousness in God? How could they ever perceive the ways of the Lord are equal and their own unequal? If in fact the natural man had no kind of capacity any more than has the horse or mule to love and serve God, to repent and believe the Gospel, then the pressing of such duties upon him would be most unreasonable, nor could their non-compliance be at all criminal. Accordingly we find that after our Lord informed Nicodemus of the necessity of man’s being born again ere he could “see” or believe to the saving of his soul, He declared that he was “condemned already” for not believing (John 3:18), and then He cleared up the whole matter by saying, “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (vv. 19, 20).

From these and similar verses well-instructed scribes in the kingdom of Heaven have been led to draw a sharp distinction between the absence of natural faculties and the lack of moral ability, the latter being the essence of moral depravity. The absence of natural faculties clears one from blame, for one who is physically blind is not blameworthy because he cannot see, nor is an idiot to be condemned because he is devoid of rationality. Moral inability is of a totally different species, for it proceeds from an evil heart, consisting of a culpable failure to use aright those talents with which God has endowed us. The unregenerate man who refuses to obtain any knowledge of God, through reading His Word, is justly chargeable with such neglect, but the saint is not guilty because he fails to arrive at a *perfect* knowledge of God, for such an attainment lies beyond the reach of his faculties.

If any object to what has just been pointed out and say, This is a distinction of no consequence: inability is inability, what a man cannot do he *cannot* do; whether it be owing to a lack of faculties or the absence of a good heart it comes to the same thing. The answer is, True, so far as the *end* is concerned, but not so as to the *criminality*. If an evil disposition were a valid excuse, then all the evil in the world would be excusable. Because sin cannot be holiness, is it the less evil? Because the sinner cannot, at the same time, become a saint, is he no more a sinner? Because an evil-minded man cannot get rid of his evil mind while he has no inclination to do so, is he only to be pitied like one who labours under a misconception? True also this distinction affords no relief to one who is dead in sins, nor does it inform him how he can by his own effort become alive to God; nevertheless, it adds to his condemnation and makes him aware of his awful state.



But for vindicating the justice of God, for magnifying His grace, for laying low the haughtiness of man, it is a distinction of vital consequence however hateful it may be to the ungodly. Unless the line be drawn between excusing a wicked heart and pitying a palsied hand, between moral depravity and the lack of moral faculties, then the whole Word of God and all His ways with man must appear invalid, shrouded in midnight darkness. Deny this distinction and God's requiring perfect obedience from such imperfect creatures must seem altogether unreasonable—His condemning to everlasting misery every one who does evil (when doing evil is what no man can avoid) excessively harsh. But let men be made aware of the horrible plague of their hearts—let the patent difference between the absence of moral faculties and the sinful misuse of them be seen and felt—and every mouth will be stopped and all the world become guilty before God.

Though at first it may seem to the preacher that the proclamation of human impotency defeats his ends and makes against the highest interest of his hearers, yet if God is pleased to bless his fidelity unto the Truth (and faith may ever count upon such blessing) it will do the hearer good in the end, for it will drive him out from the hiding place of falsehood and it will bring him to realize his need of fleeing for refuge to the glorious hope set before him in the Gospel. By pulling down strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against God, the way is paved for bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. To see one's self "without strength" and at the same time "without excuse" is indeed humiliating, yet both must be seen at once by the sinner before either the justice of the Divine Law or the grace of the Gospel can possibly be appreciated. A heartfelt conviction of one's utter helplessness accompanied by the conviction of guilt for the same is the chief prerequisite for embracing Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour.

It will thus be seen that there are two chief dangers concerning which the preacher must be on his guard while endeavouring to expound this doctrine. First, that while pressing the utter inability of the natural man to meet the just claims of God or even so much as perform a single spiritual duty, he does not overthrow or even weaken the equally evident fact of man's moral responsibility. Second, that in his zeal to leave unimpaired the moral agency and personal accountability of the sinner, he does not repudiate his total depravity and death in trespasses and sins. That this is no easy task is freely admitted, and here as everywhere the minister is made to feel his need of seeking wisdom from Above. Yet let it be pointed out that prayer is not designed as a substitute for hard work and study, but rather is a preparative for the same. Difficulties are not to be shunned but overcome by diligent effort, but diligent effort can only be rightly directed and effectually employed as Divine *grace* enables, and that grace is to be expectantly *sought*.

Probably it is best to begin by treating of *the fact* of man's impotency. At first this may be presented in general terms and in its broad outlines, by showing that the thrice holy God can require nothing less than holiness from His creatures, that He can by no means tolerate any sin in them. The Standard which God has set before men is the Moral Law which demands perfect and perpetual obedience, and being spiritual it enjoins holiness of character as well as conduct, purity of heart as well as acts. Such a Standard fallen man cannot reach, such demands he cannot meet, as is demonstrated from the entire history of the Jews under that Law. Next it should be pointed out that the Lord Jesus did not lower that Standard or modify God's commands, but uniformly and insistently upheld the one and pressed the other, as is unmistakably clear in Matthew 5:17-48—

nevertheless He repeatedly affirmed the moral impotency of fallen man: John 5:44; 6:44; 8:43. This same twofold teaching is repeated by the Apostles, especially in the Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians.

From the general we may descend to the particular and show *the extent* of man's impotency and depravity, that sin has ruined the whole of his being—so that the understanding is darkened, the heart corrupted, the will perverted—each detail being proved and illustrated from Scripture. Then in summing up this solemn aspect, appeal may be made to that word of Christ's wherein He declared not merely were there *many* things or even *some* things we cannot do without His enablement, but, "without Me ye can do *nothing*" (John 15:5)—nothing good, nothing acceptable to God. If man could prepare himself to turn unto God, or turn of himself after the Holy Spirit has prepared him, he could do much. But since it is God who works in us "both to will and do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13), then *He* is the one who first implants the desire and then gives the power to fulfil it. Not only must the understanding be so enlightened as to discern the good from the evil, but the heart has to be changed so as to *prefer* the good over the evil.

Next it is well to show clearly *the nature* of man's inability: what it does *not* consist of (the lack of faculties suited to the performance of duty) and of what it *does* consist. Care needs to be taken and arguments entered into so as to show man's inability is *moral* rather than physical, *voluntary* rather than compulsory, *criminal* rather than innocent. After this has been done at some length confirmation may be obtained by an appeal to the hearer's own experience. If honest he must acknowledge that his own consciousness testifies to the fact that he sins willingly and therefore willfully, and that his conscience registers condemnation upon him. The very fact that we sin freely, and that conscience accuses us, shows we ought to have avoided it. Whatever line a man takes in seeking to justify his own wrongdoing, he promptly forsakes it whenever his fellows wrong him: he never argues *they* were unable to do otherwise, nor does he excuse them on the ground of their inheriting a corrupt nature from Adam! Moreover, in the hour of remorse, the man who has squandered his substance and wrecked his health does not even excuse *himself* but freely owns "What a fool I have been: there is no one to blame but myself."

The impotency of the natural man to choose God for his Portion is greater than that of an ape to reason like an Isaac Newton, yet there is this vital difference between the two: the inability of the former is a criminal one—that of the latter is not so because of its native and original incapacity. Man's moral inability lies not in lack of capacity but in *desire*: one in whom there is a willing mind and a desire of heart to do the thing commanded but no capacity to carry out the same incurs no guilt. But where there is capacity (competent faculties) but unwillingness, there is guilt—wherever disaffection for God exists so does sin. Man's moral inability consists of an inveterate aversion for God and it is this corruption of heart which alone has influence to prevent the proper use of his faculties with which he is endowed, and issues in acts of sin and rebellion against God. Even the bare knowledge of duty in all cases renders moral agents under obligation to do it: "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

It is very necessary that the preacher should be perfectly clear in his own mind that the moral impotence of the natural man is *not* of such a nature as to exempt him from God's claims or excuse him from the discharge of his duties. Hyper-Calvinists have drawn the erroneous conclusion that it is incongruous to call upon the unregenerate to perform spiritual duties, and say that only exhortations suited to their State, such as the

performance of civil righteousness, should be addressed to them. The truth is that a perfect heart and a perfect life are as much required now as if men were *not* fallen creatures, and required of the greatest sinner as much as of the best saint. The righteous demands of the Most High must not be whittled down because of human depravity. David did not trim his exhortations to meet the inability of man: "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way" (Psa. 2:12). Isaiah did not keep back that command, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes" (1:16), simply because his hearers were so corrupt they would not and could not comply.

Nor should the preacher have the slightest hesitation in urging the unregenerate to use the means of grace and in declaring it is men's bounden duty to employ them. The Divine ordinances of hearing and reading the Word, of praying and conversing with God's people are thereby made a real test of men's hearts—as to whether they really desire salvation or despise it. Though God does renew men by His Spirit, yet He does appoint the means by which the sinner is to be subservient to such a work of grace: the which if they scorn and neglect the blame is in themselves and not in God. If we are not willing to seek salvation it proves we have no desire to find it, and so in the Day to come we shall be reprov'd as wicked and slothful servants (Matt. 25:26). To plead that man has no power will then avail him nothing for it shall appear with sunlight clearness that his lack of power consists only in a lack of *heart*, and he will be justly condemned for contempt of God's Word, and his blood will be upon his own head for disregarding the warnings of God's servants.

Yet so perverse is fallen human nature, men will argue, What is the good of using the means when it lies not in our power to give effect to them? The first rejoinder is: Even if there were no hope of success, yet God's command for us to use the means is quite sufficient to demand our compliance. "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). I cannot infallibly promise a farmer who plows and sows that he shall have a good crop, yet I may assure him that it is God's general way to bless the prudent and diligent. I cannot say to everyone who desires posterity, Marry and you shall have children—but I may point out that if they refuse the ordinance of marriage they will never have any lawful children. Moreover, the preacher needs to point out the grave peril incurred by those who spurn the helps God promises. Felix "trembled" (Acts 24:25), but he failed to improve his convictions. Unless the Lord be sought while He is "near" to us (Isa. 55:6), He may finally abandon us. Every resistance to the impressions of the Spirit leaves the heart harder than it was before.

After all that has been said it is scarcely necessary for us to press upon the preacher the tremendous importance of this doctrine. It displays as no other the perfect consistency of Divine justice and Divine grace. It reveals to the believer that his infirmities and imperfections are not such comfortable extenuations of guilt as he would like to think: all moral infirmity, all lack of perfect holiness, is entirely his *own fault*, for which he should be deeply humbled. It shows sinners that their perdition is really altogether of themselves for they are unwilling to be made clean. The kindest thing we can do for them is to slay their self-righteous hopes, to make them realize both their utter helplessness and entire inexcusableness. The high demands of God are to be pressed upon them with the design of bringing them to cry unto Him to graciously work in them that which He requires. Genuine conviction of sin consists of a thorough realization of responsibility and guilt and a thorough realization of our inability and dependence upon Divine grace, and noth-

ing is so well calculated to produce that conviction, under the Spirit's blessing, as the faithful exposition of this unpalatable truth.—A.W.P.

### THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

As we have previously intimated, in order to discover the doctrinal and spiritual meaning of our Lord's teaching in Luke 10:30-35 it is necessary to pay attention to the *context*. There we find a lawyer asking Christ, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (v. 25). His immediate answer we have already noted: it remains for us to point out that in the passage we are now pondering the Saviour supplied a further and more humbling, if less direct, reply. What is it that the sinner must do in order to obtain everlasting felicity? Consider the actual condition of fallen man and then answer your own question. The sinner has fallen among thieves, who have stripped him, wounded him, abandoned him to his fate, leaving him half dead—alive to the world, yet dead God-ward. What can such an one do? They who teach salvation by works ignore the ruin which sin has wrought in the human constitution; they who inculcate salvation by self-effort repudiate man's total depravity.

Such we believe was Christ's purpose in the first part of this passage: to make clear the fact that fallen man is in such a wretched condition he is *beyond* doing anything for his deliverance. But such a truth is far too distasteful to proud human nature. Man will not accept the Divine verdict, he will not believe his case is so desperate as the Scriptures depict it. He persuades himself that it lies in his own power to win the favour of God. He thinks that if he tries his best to render obedience to the Divine commandments and employs himself in religious performances such endeavours will receive an eternal recompense. All the expedients which human wisdom has devised as remedies for the wounds sin has inflicted may be reduced to two—law-keeping and ritualistic performances—and man fondly concludes that he finds Scriptural warrant for such remedies. Did not God Himself give the Law at Sinai, a law both moral and ceremonial? Then surely if we use them diligently they must prove effective!

It was, we are convinced, to expose the sophistry of such a theory that Christ introduced into His narrative the "priest" and the "Levite." They were indeed the representatives of a Divinely-instituted system of religion, but *Judaism* was never appointed by God as a means of *salvation*. So far from the Law being given to furnish redemption it was but a "schoolmaster unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24), revealing to man his wretchedness and powerlessness to meet the Divine requirements. In the very nature of the case law cannot condone, but must condemn its transgressors. Though the law demands obedience, it cannot communicate enablement. On the other hand, it cannot excuse disobedience. And since fallen man is "without strength" (Rom. 5:6), his case is utterly hopeless so far as salvation by law-keeping is concerned. The Law cannot impart life, so of what avail can it be unto one who is dead toward God?

In perfect accord with what has been just pointed out, our Lord represented the priest and the Levite as coming where the wounded traveler lay "by chance," and not by premeditated purpose. Therein He plainly denoted it was never God's design that either the moral or the ceremonial law should improve the condition of the fallen one. All they could do was "look on him" (take note of his condition) and "pass by on the other side." The Law can render no assistance to those who have broken it. On the one hand it makes no abatement of its demands and on the other it shows no mercy. The Law can furnish no relief to those who are naked, wounded, half dead. It can supply no robe of righteousness, pour in no balm, impart no life. It cannot so much as speak a word of comfort to the distressed conscience: rather does it fill it with terror.

It is on *that* dark background the Saviour brought into more vivid relief the blessedness and glory of the Gospel of the grace of God. This is what is now presented to our view. But before we turn to that Divine grace as acted out in the Person and work of His dear Son, we will dispose of what some are fond of raising as an objection. We are told by a certain type of would-be superior expositors that we must not “go too far” in our application of such a passage as this, that we must beware of reading a meaning into every “trivial clause”—that we should fix our attention upon the “main features” and ignore what is “only verbiage.” Particularly do these men warn us against looking for a meaning in each detail of our Lord’s parables. Personally we have long believed that the danger lies in the opposite direction: mere generalizations convey no tangible and clearly-defined concepts to the mind, and where such a loose method of exegesis be adopted, all certainty is at an end.

As the author of the “Numerical Bible” has pertinently pointed out: “A picture out of which we may leave whatever features we please to consider of no use save for decoration is surely that in which we are most liable to go astray. On the other hand, having to make every detail fit is just what will put bounds to the imagination when disposed to go astray. The insisting upon a complete agreement between the representation and what it represents is in the interests of exact interpretation every way.” But the door is not open for any debate upon this point: our Lord Himself has settled it once for all. In Matthew 13:3-9 we have the parable of “The Sower” and at verse 18 Christ began His explanation of the same. What did He say there? Did He merely generalize and summarize or did He particularize? He particularized and showed that *every detail* possessed a distinct significance! The “seed” was the Word of the kingdom, the “wayside” soil was an hearer who understood it not, the “fowls” which came and devoured the seed were “the Wicked One” who prevents the Word finding lodging in the heart. So Christ went on through each part of the parable, assigning a specific meaning to every term He used therein. Shall we then be deemed “fanciful” when we discover a beauty in every separate line of the picture of the good Samaritan, when the Lord Himself declared the “thorns” on the third kind of fruitless ground symbolized “the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches” in verse 22?!

As though to anticipate the objection that that particular parable was an exception, standing in a different category from all others, we find in Mark’s Gospel that before He expounded its meaning Christ asked His disciples, “Know ye not *this* parable? and how then will ye know *all* parables?” (4:13). He then went on to explain that the smallest detail in it conveyed express instructions. But more—if we turn back again to Matthew 13 it will be found that to settle the matter once and for all, Christ condescended to interpret *another* of His parables, that of the “Tares.” Here, too, He gave a distinct meaning to *every detail*: the “Sower” is the Son of Man, the “field” is the world, the “good seed” the children of the kingdom, the “tares” the children of the Wicked One, the “Enemy that sowed them is the devil,” the “harvest” is the end of the world, the “reapers” are the angels. The only detail not interpreted is “the furnace of fire,” because *it* is literal and not figurative. Thus, when we fail to perceive a meaning in the minutiae of our Lord’s parables it is not because such is not there, but because we are not sufficiently spiritual to perceive it.

### III. The Saviour Succouring.

1. “But a certain Samaritan” (Luke 10:33). This opening “But” (rather than “And”) is designed to draw a sharp contrast, to bring into welcome relief what follows from that which pre-

cedes. A “certain” Samaritan: observe he is not named, which was a rebuke not only to the lawyer but to the whole of unbelieving Israel, the allusion being to the *unknown Stranger* in their midst. But why allude to Himself as a “Samaritan”? Varied, indeed, are the thoughts embraced in this term. First, this was one of the Saviour’s Divine titles, for it signifies “Keeper,” and is He not designated “He that keepeth Israel . . . the LORD is thy Keeper” (Psa. 121:4, 5)? Second, it was a name given Him by way of reproach by His enemies: “Say we not well Thou art a Samaritan and hast a demon?” (John 8:48). The Samaritans were abhorred by the Jews, and they refused to have any dealings with them (John 4:9), and only as a last resort would a Jew accept help from such a quarter! Third, the Samaritans were under the curse of the Law, being two-thirds heathen—see 2 Kings 17 for their unlovely origin. And this the true Samaritan must needs be: if He would remove the curse denounced on sin, He must Himself bear it.

2. “As He journeyed.” This heightens the contrast pointed by the opening “But.” It was “by chance,” without design on their part, that the “priest” and the “Levite” passed that way. Not so with the antitypical “Samaritan.” The very term “journeyed” imports a *definite design* and destination, a specific starting point and goal. What human pen is capable of describing the “journey” which was here undertaken—a journey taken by none less than the Son of God. It was a journey from the heights of celestial glory to the degradation of Bethlehem’s manger. It tells of the *activity* of Divine love. It was a lengthy and labourious one, one which entailed untold hardship and suffering, for at times He “had not where to lay His head.” That journey was not completed till the Cross was reached, when He entered that unspeakable darkness wherein the light of God’s countenance was removed from Him. Yet knowing all of this beforehand, that journey was freely entered into. Murmur not then fellow-minister or fellow-believer when God calls you to take some unpleasant journey in His service, but remind yourself of the one undertaken by Christ.

3. “Came where he was.” If anyone feels we have “strained” the word *journey* in the above paragraph, we would remind him there is one other passage (and only one other in the New Testament) wherein Christ represents Himself as taking a “journey,” namely after distributing the “talents” (equipping His Apostles—and servants—for their work) He “straightway took His journey” (Matt. 25:15). Now if that “journey” signifies His ascension from earth to Heaven (and it can signify nothing else) why should we be deemed “fanciful” for regarding the “journey” in Luke 10:33 as His descent from Heaven to earth? The outcome of this journey was that it brought Christ to where the fallen one lay. With gratitude the believer exclaims, “He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay” (Psa. 40:2—a Messianic Psalm as vv. 6-8 make clear)—but in order to do so Christ has to enter the pit where he lay. He came to seek and to save that which was lost and did so by putting Himself in their Law-place, taking upon Himself their sins.

4. “And when He saw him.” It was an elect soul which the Saviour here gazed upon, for the sovereign grace of God is exercised unto none save those who were “from the beginning chosen unto salvation” (2 Thess. 2:13). Thus we may regard these words as first looking back to a point before the foundation of the world, when Christ contemplated those given unto Him by the Father in the glass of His decrees. In Proverbs 8, where Christ is before us under His title of “Wisdom,” He is seen with the Father “before the mountains were settled . . . while as yet He had not made the earth” (vv. 25, 26). “Then I was by Him (said the Son) as One brought up with Him,” then it is added, “and My delights were with the sons of men” (vv. 30, 31). God showed Christ

those “many brethren” among whom He was to be the Firstborn. But after His incarnation He saw them in their actual fallen state, yet He was not repelled by their putrifying sores, nor did He turn from them in disdain, not even from the leper or the adulteress. What a sight for One accustomed to behold the glories of Heaven!

5. “He had compassion on him.” How this line in the picture brings out the heart of Christ toward His own! He did not gaze upon this wretched object with stoical composure, but felt deeply his abject misery. This word evidences the reality of the Divine incarnation and manifests the genuineness of Christ’s humanity. It is a word which occurs again and again in the Gospels manifesting the fact that the Lord Jesus was “moved with compassion.” It is recorded for our instruction and consolation, teaching us that our High Priest is not one who “cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15), for “in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17). Therein He differed from the angels: they may pity us, but they cannot have “compassion” on us. Pity is sympathy *for* one who is in distress, but compassion is to sorrow *with* him: it is the placing of one’s self alongside another in distress and sharing it with him. Thus it was with the Saviour: He assumed our very nature and “took our infirmities” upon Him (Matt. 8:17). It was love moving Him to use His power on our behalf.

6. “And went to him.” Here again the antithesis is sharply drawn, for this clause is in designed contrast from the “passed by on the other side” of the priest and the Levite. It brings out the radical difference between the Law and the Gospel. The Law can render no assistance to fallen man, but the Gospel presents One who is mighty to save. Here is good news, glad tidings indeed. The Law cannot bring us close to God, but the Gospel brings God close to sinners. “And went to him.” Christ does not merely advance half way toward the desperately wounded one and then bid him to come the other half. There would be no good news in *that* for one who is *dead* toward God. Nor does Christ come nine-tenths of the way and bid us go the last tenth. No, blessed be His name, He comes all the way, going after the lost sheep “until He find it, and when He hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders, rejoicing” (Luke 15:4, 5).

7. “And bound up his wounds.” How this reminds us of that Messianic prophecy at the beginning of Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me: because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek, He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.” It was part of His commission to bind up the brokenhearted. Christ alone can speak peace to the burdened conscience, open blind eyes, liberate the sinner’s enslaved will, and loose the tongue so that it gladly praises God. It is love which moves the Redeemer to employ His all-mighty power for the recovery of sinners. It is grace which causes Him to lay His hand upon those who are such revolting objects and tenderly minister unto them. Has He bound up your wounds, my reader? No matter how desperate they may be, they are not beyond the skill of this great Physician. Unless *Christ* does bind them up, you are lost forever.

8. “Pouring in oil and wine.” Observe the means for effective healing. Oil is the element with which anointing was made (Exo. 30:25; Lev. 8:12) and our Redeemer is anointed with the Holy Spirit (Isa. 61:1). Oil is therefore the symbol of the Spirit. Wine is the emblem of joy (Psa. 104:15), as “the fruit of the wine” (Luke 22:17, 18) is also the memorial of the precious blood of Christ. Nothing but the joyful remembrance of Christ’s finished work, applied in the power of the Spirit, can speak peace to the lacerated conscience. When the Divine oil and wine are poured into the deepest and most dangerous wounds of sin, they infallibly work a perfect cure—for the



atonement blood has a Divine virtue to heal—being appointed for that very purpose. It “cleanseth us” says one who had experienced its healing power, “from *all* sin.” And no wonder, for it is the blood of Immanuel. He who shed it was God and man in one Christ, and therefore is it possessed of infinite efficacy and merit. His blood can make the foulest clean, and by cleansing, it heals.

9. “And set him on His own beast.” This line in our picture presents an aspect of the truth which has no place in the emaciated evangelist of our day. Christ not only comes to the sinner in his dire distress and helplessness—He does more. He not only ministers to him and relieves his want—He goes much further. He does not leave him after He has befriended him. He not only empowers him to walk but instates him into an entirely new position. Christ not only meets the sinner in his place of need, but *gives him His own place*. Here is the climactic blessing of the Gospel: that the one who is saved by Christ is not only pardoned and cleansed, healed and recovered, but brought near to God in Christ’s own acceptableness. Because Christ took our place we enter into His place: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21), and therefore God “hath raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies *in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 2:6).

10. “And brought him to an inn.” Still the befriended one does nothing for himself: all is done for him. And how accurate this line in the picture! he was not brought “home” but to an “inn.” When Christ saves a soul He does not take him to Heaven at once, but leaves him in this world for a while longer. But observe well the *character* which is now stamped upon him: the “inn” is for wayfarers and travelers. And such is the character which Christians are to maintain upon earth: “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11). Thus we may note that Christ gives His people the *same* character He sustained—for when here He was the homeless Stranger. The “inn” is where travelers assemble and spend the night. It is the local church that is symbolized, which is an assembly of strangers and pilgrims, the place where they meet together in spiritual fellowship.

11. “And took care of him” (Luke 10:34). The tender grace of the good Samaritan did not slacken: “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). 12. “When He departed”: contrast from “as He journeyed” (Luke 10:33)—His return on High. 13. “He took out two pence and gave to the host and said unto him, Take care of him.” His loving solicitude ceased not. The “host” is the minister of the local church or “house of God”—not the Spirit personally and distinctly, for Christ will not reward Him, yet as identified with His work and agents. The “two pence” we regard as the Two Testaments (each bearing the same Divine impress), which ministers are to make use of for the good of those entrusted to them. 14. “Whatsoever thou spendest more (the minister’s own labours) when *I come again*, I will repay thee.” How blessed: the parable ends with the rescued one and his caretaker looking forward with joyous anticipation to the return of his Benefactor! What must I do to enter into this experience? Take the sinner’s place before God, repudiate my own righteousness, and receive Christ as He is offered in the Gospel.—A.W.P.